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ATAXIÆ OBSTACULUM;  
AN  
ANSWER

TO CERTAIN

Queries,

Dispersed in some Parts of Gloucester-shire:

ENTITLED,

QUERIES *Proposed to the serious Consideration of those who impose upon others in Things of Divine and Supernatural Revelation, and Persecute any upon the account of Religion: With a Desire of their Candid and Christian Resolution thereof.*

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2 Tim. 2. 23. *But foolish and unlearned Questions avoyd, knowing that they do gender Strifes.*

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Guil. Jane R. P. D. Hen. Episc. Lond. à sacris Dom.

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L O N D O N,

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M DC LXXVII.

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*E R R A T A.*

**P**Age 1: line 11. for *Honours* read *Honour*; p. 6. l. 16. r. *deprecate*.  
p. 7. l. 1. f. *Creed* r. *Creeds*; p. 19. l. 12. r. *no doubt*; p. 23. l.  
2. r. *Exsignatq*; p. 24. l. 4. r. *neu quo alio* —. p. 35. in the Mar-  
gent, r. *λογικῶς*; *ibid*, l. 28. r. *a large History*; p. 47. l. 20. r. *So-*  
*cinians*; p. 107. l. 9. r. *Empires*.

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# THE PREFACE.

**N**Ext to the Vindication of the Truth, and the Satisfaction of those Persons amongst whom the *Queries* were dispers'd; the Design of the *Answerer* hath been to comply with the Gentleman's *Desire*, in returning a *Candid and Christian Resolution* to them. If any thing contain'd in these Papers be otherwise, 'tis more than was design'd, or can be discerned by the *Answerer* in his Review of them: For, he has industriously endeavour'd to speak of things with what Abstraction he possibly could, from Persons; and yet too, with that modest Freedom and Zeal, that if any one (like *David*, when *Nathan* acquainted him with the Parable of the *Eu-Lamb*) becomes his own Judge, and views himself in what is hinted or discours'd of, he is not to blame the *Answerer*; but to be thankful to God, and his own Conscience, for the discovery of his own Guilts and Aberrations.

It cannot but be acknowledged, but that the *Queries* afford variety of Mat-

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ter for the exercise of any Learned Pen: But, there is little or nothing in them, but what hath been before Objected, and *ex abundanti* Answered. And therefore, the Reader is not to expect any new Notions or Discoveries in these Papers; but old Truths vindicated with old Arguments, from old Cavils and Objections. And 'tis probable, that many who have seen the *Queries*, never met with any Book to satisfy their Minds about those doubtful Matters, that seem to be contained in them: And if they did, yet 'tis not in the Power of every private Christian, to apply general Rules and Principles to particular Cases and Instances. So that, 'tis for the sake of such, that the *Queries* are Answered; and not for Scholars, who have Abilities either to compose, or make choice of better Discourses, than what is now presented to their Perusal.

It is some-what strange, that *Dissenters* should now use the very same Methods to unsettle and pervert People, in the venerable Esteem, that they ought to have of the Church, and their Superiors; which the Popish Emissaries do with those Persons, whom they intend to proselyte

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to their abominable Religion. For the chief, if not the only Method, us'd by those Incendiaries, is, to turn Christianity into *Scepticism*; and to raise and propose *Queries* about the Scriptures, the King, the Church, the Reformation, *Martin Luther*, &c. and thereby to involve, those whom they intend to pervert, in a Labrynth of Doubts and Scruples; inso-much, that they know not upon what Foundation to fix either Faith, Hope, or Peace.

It must be acknowledged, that the Doubting of a Rational inquisitive Mind, is a very great Preparative and Help to a distinct and clear Understanding of the Truth: But then, it must be confined to things purely speculative, to Rational and Philosophical Enquiries; in which to Err, may be neither Prejudicial to the Happiness of a Man's Soul, nor the Peace of Human Society. But, for a Christian to resemble *Reuben*, and be *unstable as Water* in the Concerns of Religion, and ever and anon doubting of those Principles which relate to Faith and Practice; and raising Questions about those things which God hath plainly delivered to be our Duty: This is to arraign His Authority and Wisdom, at the Barr of our own

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Reasons, and to give Advantage and Encouragement to the Tempter, to perplex our Spirits, and unsettle our Judgments with Sceptical & vain Thoughts, & Reasonings.

And therefore, 'tis observable, that the very first Stratagem, which the Devil made use of to ruine Man-kind, was, to propose a *Query* to our first Parents; and thereby, to make them doubt of God's plain Precept and Command: *Yea, Hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every Tree of the Garden?* Gen. 3. 1. It was by this, that he unsetled their Faith, and ruined their Innocence: For *Eve*, who was first tempted, was presently soyl'd, and non-plust with the *Query*; and determined it to her Own, her Husband's, and her Posterities greatest Damage. And, who-ever will permit himself to be assaulted by Questions and Scruples, adventures upon the like Quick-sands that *Eve* did; and therefore, in all Reason, must expect the Ship-wrack of his Faith and Conscience. And hence it is, that, God knowing the Temper of our Minds (that they are apt to court every Shadow, and admire every Novelty) as well as the Frame of our Bodies, that they are but Dust; do's propose his own immutable

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table Nature, as an Example to induce us to Steadfastness and Immobility in Religion: For, when he tells us, That He Himself is the same Yesterday, and to day, and for-ever; he presently sub-joins <sup>Heb. 13.</sup> 8, 9. our Duty; *Be not carried about with divers and strange Doctrines; for, 'tis a good thing, that the Heart be established with Grace.*

*Queries* and *Scruples* in Matters of Religion, are certain Signes either of a weak and childish, or of a cavilling and froward Judgment. Some Men are Novices in Knowledge; *ever Learning, but never able to come to the Knowledge of the Truth*: Others know it, but retain and hold it in *Unrighteousness*; that is, They will not permit it to have that saving Efficacy upon themselves and others, which otherwise it would have, did they not indulge themselves either in vicious Living; or in Sceptical false Reasoning.

'Tis true, through the Darkeness and Ignorance of our Minds, 'tis natural to all of us to have disproportionable Apprehensions of Truth. And, this Infelicity is farther increased by our own voluntary Folly and Neglects: For, the Gospel is a *Light*, that would shine into our Hearts, and give us the Knowledge of

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*the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ:* It would satisfie all Judgments; that did ingenuously desire Satisfaction: It would salve all Rational and Manly Objections. But, when Men study to be Sceptical, and do not retain their Doubts and *Queries* to themselves; but divulge and spread them abroad, to *deceive the Hearts of the Simple, and over-throw the Faith of the Weak Christian:* When Men personate Scruples, and frame Doubts, and propound Questions as their Opinions, and contend for them with the same Earnestness and Zeal, as a good Christian would do for the Honour of his Lord and Master, and the Fundamentals of his Religion: When they propound them not with that Candor, Sobriety, and Meekness, as the Christian-Law injoyns them, but with Superciliousness, Insolence, and Violence, and with high Conceits of their own Knowledge and Abilities; and with an intention to expose and triumph over the weakness of their Fellow-Christians, and to gain Victory to themselves, and their Party, rather than to Truth, and the Church: I say, When Men propose *Queries* after this manner, and with these designs; 'tis evident, that in the Proposal  
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of them, they are not desirous to receive Satisfaction, but to continue unsatisfy'd: And then, 'tis just with the Almighty to permit the *God of this World to blind their Minds, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God,* <sup>2 Cor. 4.</sup> <sup>4.</sup> should shine unto them, or make any saving Impression on them.

If the Author of the *Queries* was otherwise disposed, and qualifyed, when he propos'd them; I rejoyce with him, in the Fruits and Satisfaction that he may receive in a Reflexion upon his own Innocence. That which I have chiefly design'd in the Answer given to them, is, first, to remove those false Pretences of Conscience, that Men make in Matters of Religion: For, Conscience long hath been, and still continues the *Scape-Goat*, to bear all Iniquities. Next, I have endeavour'd the Defence of Magistrate's Power in matters of Religion: For, as the Devil do's raise up some Instruments to alienate and divert the Mind of Potentates and Governours, from that which is both their Duty, their Honour, and their Interest; *viz.* to defend Religion, and to secure it from those Inundations of Heresies, Schisms, and Impieties, which corrupt its Truths, divide

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divide its Worship, and in the end, will ruin its Profession: So, he raises up other Instruments to perswade them into an Opinion and Judgment, That the Church and Truths of Christ, are none of their Province; that they are quite excluded from their Cognizance and Power; and, that every Christian (*quà talis*) hath a Privilege to be freed from their Government; Let him do what he will to his Soul; let him embrace any or no Religion, he ought not to be contradicted or disturbed; but to be let alone in what his own Mind serves and inclines him to. The Maintainers of this Opinion (besides the irreparable Mischiefs that they do to the Souls of Men) deal worse with Kings and Magistrates, than the *Philistins* did with *Sampson*; For, they do not only put out their Eyes, but cut off their Hands, that they may never be able to do any Service for God, in the Vindication and Protection of his Truth and Church.

When God has a mind to punish or destroy a People, he conceals from them the things that belong unto their Bliss. Now, amongst those many Methods that are discours'd of, as contributive to the Happiness of this Nation, I conceive all of them may be



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be reduced to these two Heads; viz. To break off our Sins by Righteousness; and, To lay aside all petty Differences and Animosities, and to unite our selves into one Body, against the common Enemy of *Protestantism*: This later would presently engage us upon the former Method: For, St. James tells us, *Where Strife is in Commu-* Jam. 3.  
*nions, there will be every evil Work in* 16.  
*Practice.* This also, would weaken the Interest, and confound the Audaciousness of the *Papal* Faction.

And, 'tis very strange, that the *Jesuited*-Priests, who are not only more dangerous, but more odious to all sorts of *Protestants*, than any other condition, or rank of Men; should have the Luck for so many Years, to escape the Lash of all the Penal-Laws, and not one of them be made an Example of Justice.

It is true, The Papists of late Years are very zealous for Liberty of Conscience: A Man can scarce come to a Coffee House, or a Publick-Meeting; but his Ears are presently arrested with Invectives against *Henry* the Eighth, *Queen Elizabeth*, and the Execution of Penal-Laws in Matters of Religion. And this very thing, would make a well-minded *Protestant* suspect the Tenent,

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ment, were it for no other Reason, but, because it hath such Advocates. But, he must wink with both Eyes, that sees not into the Design of such Arguings: For, Is the *Inquisition* pull'd down in *Italy* or *Spain*? Has his Holiness declared against it, *ex Cathedra*? Or, What Assurance will he give us, that it shall not be set up in *England*, with the Acquisition, and Turn of the Kingdom?

The vigorous Execution of one Law, would do more good than a Million of *Proclamations*. But, so long as Laws are made, and never executed; so long as their Force is rescinded, their Course obstructed, their Penalties pardoned; it cannot but be fear'd, that the Government will be rendered at last, as contemptible and insignificant, as the Laws themselves. Governours may as well hope to imprison the Air, or fetter the Ocean, as impose Restraints upon their Subjects under such Circumstances; who will ever and anon, assume the Confidence to spy out, and blaze abroad their Faults and *Indecorums*, and maliciously represent their Actions and Determinations. Impunity will encrease Mischiefs, and make Criminals bold and insolent: And, if ever Men challenge to  
them-

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themselves a Liberty in the Affairs, and Matters of Religion, they will be animated to elude and laugh at Laws in secular and civil Concerns. For (as one sayes) *'tis the Nature of Man to despise Human Laws, when he is mis-led in those that are Divine. And the Freedom which provokes him to offend God, encourages him also against that Authority which indulg'd him that Liberty.* 'Tis (sayes another excellent Writer) a hard State, and Tyrannical, where Superiours should assume to themselves all Licence of Ill-doing; and not permit to Inferiours at least-wise, a Liberty of speaking, which is but a slender Revenge for so great a wrong as ill Government.

Sir Edw.  
Sandys  
Eur. Sp.

But, to conclude the Reader's Trouble in this Preface: If things proceed on at the same Rate for a few Years longer, as they have done for some Years past, viz. that Colts must put Trammels upon their Pacers, and Inferiours prescribe to their Governours; and (as one sayes) that *Manners must rule Laws, and not Laws Manners*; The next Generation (if not we our selves) will see no Face of a Church, nor any Foot-steps of the common Christianity left among us.

The

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AN  
ANSWER  
TO  
Certain QUERIES, &c.

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Query 1.

**W** *Hether Christ hath Instituted a Gospel Church ?  
( And if so. )*

*Answ.* I never met with any such Expression as a *Gospel - Church*, in the New - Testament, or any of the Primitive Writers: 'Tis a Phrase lately Coyn'd in Divinity. And to speak the Language of Scripture, or Antiquity, tends most to the Edification of the Age that is Present, as well as the Honours of those Ages which are past. The Church receives its Denomination either from its Author, by whom it was founded; and so 'tis call'd, The Church of God, or of Christ; or, from the Na-

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tion where 'tis planted; and so we call ours, The Church of *England*; or from the Members that are the Constitutive Parts of it, and so it's call'd, The Christian Church. We may as well call the Church of the *Jews*, The Law-Church, as that of Christians, The *Gospel-Church*. But I presume, the Author of these *Queries* means, a Church Constituted, and Governed, according to the Rules of the Gospel; And then, I Answer;

No Christian ever deny'd it.

*Quer. 2. What is an Instituted Church of the Gospel? And by what means do Persons become a Church of Christ?*

*Ans. I Answer to the First Part of the Query, with St. Paul: The Church*  
*Ephes. 2. 19, 20.* *is God's Family, or Household, Built upon the Foundation of the Apostles and Prophets; Jesus Christ himself, being the chief Corner-Stone: Or, in other Words, The Christian-Church (by which Christ will be Honoured in the World, till He Resigns up His Government into the Hands of his Father) is a Society of Men, joyn- ing together in the Profession of the Chri- stian*



*stian Faith; having right Pastors or Officers, invested with Power to guid and Govern them in the Wayes of God; and to dispence unto them, the Ordinances of the Gospel. And, I hope, there may be as well such a National Church in England, as there was for above 1500 Years in Palestine, among the Jews. Certainly, Christ that had the Heathen given Him <sup>Psalm 2.</sup> for his Inheritance, and the utmost Parts <sup>8.</sup> of the Earth for his Possession, would have His Church Catholick, as well as Holy; and so Illustrious, that it should be taken Notice of, for its High Scituation, and large Extent, as well as for the Truth of its Doctrine, and the Purity of its Worship. Let the Reader peruse either the Promise, that God made to Abraham in particular, in Gen. 17. 4, 5. or to the Church in general, as those in Isa. 52. ult. Isa. 55. 5. Zech. 2. 11. And it will evidently appear, That not a few particular Persons, but whole Nations, were to Embrace the Christian Faith; and upon that account, they were to Constitute the Christian Church. Certainly, when Christ threatned the Jews to take <sup>Math. 21.</sup> the Kingdom of God from them, and give <sup>43.</sup> it unto a Nation that should bring forth the*

*Fruits of it*; He must mean more by a Nation, than one particular Congregation of Christians: For, if that had been the utmost Meaning of his Threat, the Christian Church would have been confined within smaller Bounds than the *Jewish* was, when it was impaled within the Land of *Canaan*. But it was far from the Intention of our Redeemer, to crumble his Church into such Minute, and little Principles of Being; as *Democritus* did the World, when he resolv'd it into Atoms. Much less is it any where his Command, that Men should attempt to Demolish an Established National - Church, and patch up a few Shreds of particular Congregations out of the Ruines of it.

The Second Part of the *Query* needs some Explication: For if the Meaning of it be, That five or six Persons make a Church of Christ, I deny that Christ ever intended the Erection of any such contemptible Church in the World. But if the Meaning be, How particular Persons become Members of the Church of Christ? I Answer, two ways: 1. Externally, by a Sacramental Admission into the Church, and a visible Profession of the Christian Faith. 2. Internally, by living up

up to their Baptifmal Vows and Engagements; and being Myftically united to Chrift, as their Head. That a vifible Profeflion of Chriftianity does Entitle Men to the Priviledges of the Church, is evident not only from the Church of *Corinth*, which *St. Paul* owns for a Church, notwithstanding the Debaucheries and Immoralities tolerated therein; but alfo, from Chrift's Parable of the Tares, and the good and bad Fifh. The Tares were to grow among the Wheat, till Harvest: *Math. 13.* And the good and bad Fifh, were both of them catch'd, and contain'd in the fame Net.

Quer. 3. *Whether the Paroshial-Churches within thefe Nations, and the Worſhip therein uſed, be according to Chriſt's Inſtitution, or the Rules and Order of the Goſpel?*

*Anſw.* Shew the contrary, and there ſhall not be wanting any *Chriſtian* or *Candid* Answer. But then let the Church of *England* be allowed the like Liberty, which is aſſumed by all ſorts of Diſſenters, *viz.* That ſome things may be admitted and practis'd in the Church, which

are not expresly Commanded in the Sacred Scriptures. What-ever Men (either Ignorant or Malicious) speak and write against the Worship used in Parochial-Churches; nothing is more evident, than that the Rule and Standard of Worship, directs us to pay our Devotions to the True God, and that in and through the Name of Jesus Christ: It obliges us to Confess our Sins, and Implore their Pardon; to beg the Guidance and Aid of God's Holy Spirit, with all the Blessings belonging to this Life, and that which is to come; and that in behalf of our selves and others: It teaches us how to praise God for his Mercies, how to deprecate his Judgments, and to Pray for all sorts of Men upon Earth, as well without as within the Pale of the Church; and all this, in significant and intelligible Words; and not in Exotick Phrases, or in a Language that cannot be understood by the People. It retains the two Sacraments, that were ever observed and celebrated in the Christian Church. It observes the Rites of Christian-Burial; and does not pollute or desecrate those Bodies, that were Dedicated to God in Baptism, and expect a Joyful Resurrection, with the *Burial of*

*an Ass.* It retains the Creed, of the Catholick Church. It instructs its Members in the Principles of Piety, towards God; of Loyalty towards their Prince; of Righteousness towards Men; of Humility, and Obedience, to Superiours; of Friendliness, and Candor, to Equals; of Modesty, Meekness, and Tenderness, to Inferiours; of Patience, Temperance, Sobriety, and Contentedness, towards themselves. It joyns Fasting with Prayer, and Alms-Deeds with Thanksgivings: And although it confines its Members to a Form of Prayer, in the Publick Worship of God; yet its Ministers have provided more variety for every Mans voluntary, and private Devotions. And if the Worship of God used thus in *Parochial-Churches*, be not according to *Christ's Institution*, and the *Rule and Order of the Gospel*; let it be Demonstrated wherein it is Defective, or in what things it is Redundant.

Quer. 4. *Whether it be not the Duty of every Christian, to with-draw from every Brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the Traditions received by the Apostles?*

B 4

*Ans.*

*Answ.* No doubt it is. But then we would do well to satisfy our selves, what this *disorderly Walking* is. A very excellent Expofitor tells us, from the Importance of the \* *Greek Word* (which in the † Preceding Epistle, is Translated *Unruly*) that 'tis nothing else but for Men to with-draw their Obedience from the Church; or like disbanded Soldiers, to run away from their Colours, to forsake the Service of their Superiours, and Commands of their Bishops, and step out of their Stations, wherein the Divine Providence has placed them; and in a word; to be such busie Bodies, as to waste their precious Minutes in impertinent Employments, and in those things which do not belong to their Callings and Conditions. These are the Persons, that *Walk* irregularly or *disorderly*: And from these we are to *withdraw our selves*; i. e. We must not have any Familiar or Friendly Conversation with them. But this Seccession, or *with-drawing*, only concerns Private Persons: For as under the Law, so likewise under the Gospel, any Leper, though he were excluded the Society of the People, yet he had liberty to have Access unto the Priest. Lastly, Private Persons

\* *At d. N.*† *1 Thes.*

5. 14.

2 *Thes* 3.  
6.

Persons themselves, are not totally to *with-draw* themselves from such *disorderly Walkers*, till the Governours of the Church have examined and considered the Offence, and pass'd Censure upon the Offender. Nay, even then, the Apostle does not absolutely interdict all Society with such a Person; for when he had said, † *Have no Company with him*, † 2 Thes. 3. 14. he presently sub-joyns in the next Verse; *Tet count him not as an Enemy, but admonish him as a Brother.*

Quer. 5. *Whether it be not the Duty of every Christian, to chuse the Communion of the purest Church? And whether in the Choyce thereof, he is bound to follow his own Judgment, after the best Information he is able to attain unto, or other Mens Judgments against his own?*

Ans. If any Church in the whole World can be found, that exceeds the Church of *England*, either for Truth and Soundness of Doctrine, or Purity and Sanctity of Worship; let those who occasion so many Separations and Disturbances in it, betake themselves to its Communion. But to introduce Confusion in all the  
Parishes

• Deut.  
19. 14.  
Prov. 22.  
28.

Parishes in this Kingdom (which were Instituted as some conceive in the first Century after Christ; and others, about the Middle of the Second) to imitate the *Donatists*, in setting up one Altar against another; and to remove the Antient Land-Marks, expressly against the \* Divine Prohibition; this is not to Embrace the Communion of the purest Church, but to cast a Mans self out of the Catholick Church; and to administer occasion to those who are the Implacable Enemies of Protestantism, to take away both our Place, our Church, and Nation: For that will be the fatal Event at last, if every little scruple of a pretended tender-Conscience, and Sceptical-Head, may justifie Persons in their Separation from a National-Church. For a Church under that Notion, is the Ground of Unity and Communion amongst the Professors of Christianity; especially when they live under the same Government, and profess the same Common Religion. And 'tis impossible to obtain this Communion, unless the Members of the Church own this Principle, *viz.* That the Visible Unity of the Church is necessary for the great Ends of Christianity, which



which are to preserve and promote Piety and Peace. And this Profession obliges all Persons to acquiesce in those Determinations, by which the Church is visibly upheld and maintain'd. The Society is yet un-nam'd, whether Civil or Ecclesiastick, which did not alwayes justify its own Acts; and obliged those under its Authority, to conform to its Laws and Constitutions. All National-Churches, have ever Asserted their own Power, to Determine the Bounds of their own Communion; and that by such Constitutions and Rites, as they in their own Wisdoms supposed would preserve Order and Unity, and advance the Edification of those under their Charge and Government. This is Essential to the Church, as it is a Society. And there can be no Society without Government; and no Government, if every one be allowed the Priviledge to question and disobey Publick Laws and Constitutions. For certainly, nothing is more Rational, than that those who are Entrusted with the reins of Government, should be invested with Power to decide Differences and Controversies; and make those under their Charge, to Acquiesce in their Determinations.

minations. And if Inferiours disapprove their Decisions, and will follow their own Judgments against their Superiours; the World is wide enough, they may leave the Government, and betake themselves to the Communion of purer Churches, and the Conduct of Wiser Governours. *Non opus est habere civem qui parere nescit.* Neither Church nor Common-Wealth have need of those Persons, that know not how to Obey,

*Quer. 6. Whether is there any Visible living Judge in Doubts and Controversies of Religion, to whose Determinations any Man is bound to yield his Assent and Obedience, against the Dictates of his own Conscience, guided according to the best of his Light and Knowledge, by the Rule of God's Word?*

*Ans.* I have before said, That the Church is a Society; and that every Society may agree upon those Means by which all Differences arising in it, may be Determined, that may probably violate the Peace and Unity thereof. And the Church of *England* assumes no other Power or Privilege. It does not like the *Papists*, own any

any judge of Controversies in Religion; nor require any of its Members to yield an Obedience to its Determinations, against the Dictates of their own Consciences; neither solemn Assent, nor Consent, is required of the Laity. All that the Church demands, is, That Obedience be given to those Laws, which are undoubtedly Divine, an Acquiescence yielded to some Disputable Points; the violent debating of which, may endanger Peace, and shatter its Communion: And lastly, a Conformity to some Indifferent Rites, which are conducive to secure Religion from Irreverence and Contempt, by engaging its Professors to worship and serve God in the Beauty, as well as in the Truth of Holiness. And why may not the Governours of the Church of England, be admitted Umpires and Judges in these Matters, as well as the Pastors and Elders in separated Congregations.

As for Conscience, 'tis much like Honesty; that has many Professors, but very few that live up to its Rules and Dictates. And 'tis a vain thing (as shall be more fully shewn in these Papers) for Men to plead, that they make Conscience for their Guide, unless they take Scripture for their

*Rom. 13.*

their Rule. And how is it possible for an Honest upright Christian, to plead Conscience for his disobeying of Lawful Authority in things innocent and indifferent; when the Scripture, which is a Law to all Mens Consciences, commands them to obey and be *subject for Conscience sake.*

There is no one so little Conversant in the Affairs of the World, or in the History of the present, or former Ages; but very well knows, what horrid Impieties, and Immoralities, have been Acted and justified upon the Account of Conscience. And if Men do proceed on to plead that against all sense of Duty, they will come at last to have such a Reprobate state of Mind, and such distorted Apprehensions of things, as to produce that Witness within them, to justify the most impure and unnatural Practises; and so come to the State of some of the old Barbarous Heathens, who paid their best Services and Devotions, as well to their greatest Sins, as the most Deformed Creatures.

But how do the violent Dissenters from the Church of *England*, do that which this and the preceding *Query* suppose, endeavour

deavour after the best Information they are able to attain unto, and to be guided by the best of their Light and Knowledge, concerning their Duty to the King and Church, when they continue and proceed on in those Wayes and Methods, by which their Prejudices against both are strengthened and confirmed? I am very well assured, that many Persons have no other Reason to with-draw themselves from the Parochial-Churches, but only because therein is used a *Form of Prayer*. Now certainly, to separate upon so weak a Ground, can neither justify nor extenuate the Sin of Schism; but makes them lyable to that *Wo*, denounced by the Prophet, of *calling Evil Good, and Good Evil*. *Isa. 5. 20.* For it never was, nor ever will be proved, That 'tis unlawful to use a *Set-Form* of Prayer, or to joyn with Christians in the Liturgy, upon the account of its being a *Set-Form*: So that, whilst Men remain in that State, they bring upon themselves a necessity of sinning against God: And that not only because they must either disobey the Dictates of their Consciences, or the Lawful Commands of their Governours; but also, because they abstain from those things as sinful, which in their

their own Nature (although there were no Authority to impose them) are Lawful and Innocent. But if Men would for some time forsake the unlawful Assemblies, and with candid and humble Minds, with honest and good Hearts, and disengaged Affections; read the Books, and hear the Sermons of the Conformable Clergy, and attend to the Prayers of the Church; their Prejudices against them would presently expire, and they would venerate that *Manna*, which before they nauseated and despis'd. And till they do so, though they may be guided according to their best Light and Knowledge; yet they do not use their utmost Endeavours to Rectifie and Advance their Knowledge, and to attain to the best Information of Things. For if they use no other Means to be acquainted with the Equity and Reasonableness of the Constitutions of the Church of *England*, than the *Jews* did of Old, when they Enquired that of the Almighty, which they never intended to Practise; 'tis just with God to Answer them according to the Idols and Prejudices of their Hearts, and to seal them up in their Pernicious and Erroneous Conceptions of Religion.

*Jer. 42.*  
19, 20.

Religion. For, when Men Receive not the Love of the Truth, that they may be saved, i. e. When they Receive not Truth for Truth's sake, but prefer the satisfaction of their Passions and Parties, before the Honour of Christianity, and the Peace and Happiness of a National-Church; 'tis then just with God to send them strong Delusions, either to confirm them in their imbibed and pre-conceived Errours, or to believe some damnable and upstart Lyes. <sup>2 Thef. 2.</sup>

Qu. 7. Whether to inflict Corporal Punishments upon any as Transgressors in those Matters, which no Man or Society of Men whatever, have any Authority to pronounce a Judicial definitive Sentence in, so as to make it any Mans Duty to yield his Assent or Obedience thereunto, be not to Execute before Judgment? And whether to do so, be not against all Rules and Forms of Justice, both Divine and Humane, and such a Violation of the very Law and Light of Nature, as no sober or judicious Heathen was ever yet Guilty of?

Ans. Either this Gentleman is very meanly Read in Books of History, or has

a strange Temper of Spirit, in obtruding that upon the unwary Country-Man, which he is convinced to be false in his own Judgment: For, Was no *Judicious Heathen ever guilty in inflicting Corporal Punishments* upon the Primitive Christians in matters of Religion? What was *Trajan, Adrian, Antoninus-Philosophus, Septimius Severus, &c*? These Emperours were excellent Persons, and only wanted that which is the Crown of all Vertues, *viz.* True Piety to God, and Faith in the Lord Jesus; And yet they were all Bloody Persecutors of the poor Christians. And if *Plinius Secundus* may be believed, *Trajan* Raised the Third Persecution against them, for no other Reason, but because they were Christians: For so he intimates in his Epistle to that Emperour, when he proposes this Question, *Utrum nomen ipsum, etiamsi flagitiis careat, puniatur?* And it has been an Observation frequently made by Holy and Worthy Men, that the Devil's main Policy was to exasperate those Emperours most against the Christians, that were famous for Intellectual and Moral Accomplishments; for, hereby he made the World believe, That Christians were certainly wicked



wicked and abominable Wretches, when such excellent Persons did Persecute them to Death with Torments.

And (by the way) would to God the Enemy of Man-kind were not successful in the like Methods, to raze-up the Foundation of Christianity in this divided Island. For, Those Men are now become the greatest Opposers of God's Truths, and the Churches Peace, who are serious and reserved; and make great Pretences (which in many do doubt are Real) to tenderness of Conscience, and to great Strictnesses and Severities in Religion. These *Diana's* (of all the Modish Opinions amongst us) I mean, *Liberty of Conscience*, and that *The Magistrate is to use no coercive Methods, to make People serve God*; were at first maintained and defended only by Men that seem'd heartily concern'd for the Honour of Religion, and the very Power of Godliness. And the Devil well knew, that such Opinions would have been presently blasted and discredited, if they had been broach'd and upheld by Men of vicious and im-moral Practices. Therefore his business was, to make those Persons Embrace and Espouse them, that were remarkable for Holiness and Piety. Now

indeed, the debaucht Part of the Nation own those Opinions, as well as others of the Refined Sort. But the subtle Serpent never troubled himself with the Profane, till he had ensured to his own interest the sober Party, by setting them all on Fire against the Execution of Penal Statutes in the Concerns of Religion. And 'tis an amazing thing to consider the subtle Arguings of Men in this Matter; when all they say, or can say, must at last come to this Conclusion, That 'tis the Magistrate's Duty to let Men alone in the Duty they owe to God their Creator and Redeemer: They are only to look to themselves, and their own Government; But as for God, He may be either serv'd or blasphemed, own'd or renounc'd: If Men can but plead Conscience, or their own Judgments in any Wickedness, relating to the first Table, that is sufficient to excuse and justify them.

But I shall crave the Reader's Patience, by speaking something largely to this *Query*; and therefore 'tis time to make some nearer Approaches in the Answering of it.

And first, I shall crave leave to tell this Gentleman, That 'tis no Anticipation of God's

God's Judgment at Dooms-Day, or as he  
 sayes, *Executing before Judgment*, to in-  
 flict corporal or pecuniary Penalties upon  
 those Persons that offend against the  
 known and plain Rules of Duty in matters  
 of Religion. Nay, let it be shewn, Why  
 it should be so, more in Religious than in  
 civil Concerns. A Magistrate, for pro-  
 nouncing a Sentence of Condemnation  
 upon a Fellow or Murtherer, may be said  
 to *Execute before Judgment*, as well as a  
 Justice of Peace for Granting a Warrant  
 to Levy 12 d. upon an Atheist or Papist,  
 for not Repairing upon the Lord's-Day  
 to his Parish-Church. And why then  
 will this Gentleman say, That the Exe-  
 cution of such a Mild, or perhaps a Seve-  
 rer Law, is a *violation of the very Law  
 and Light of Nature*? For, Have not all  
 Nations, whether *Jewish, Heathen, or  
 Christian*, Assumed to themselves the Pow-  
 er of protecting the Honour of those Dei-  
 ties, which they have made the Object  
 of their Worship; and punish'd those Of-  
 fenders that have either neglected their  
 Duty, or affronted the Majesty of those  
 gods, which they have pretended to  
 serve? And *Grotius* thinks this so far from  
 a *violation of the Law and Light of Nature*,

† De Ju- that he † sayes, *Iustiùs illi punientur, qui*  
 re B. & P. *in eos, quos Deos putant, irreverentes atq;*  
 l. 2. c. 22. *irreligiòsi sunt; None are more justly pu-*  
 S. ult. *nish'd, than those Persons that behave*  
*themselves irreverently, and irreligiòsly, to*  
*those which they believe to be their Gods.*

But to proceed more clearly in this Matter, let us consider the severall Nations in the World, that have been Famous for professing Religion; and how the severall Authorities of them have exercised their Power therein.

And first, for Heathen - Nations; The fore-cited Author observes out of *Seneca* these Words, *Violatarum Religionum, aliubi atq; aliubi diversa pena est: sed ubiq; aliqua; Those that violate Religion, have various kinds of Punishment inflicted on them; but there is no Nation but inflicts some.* And although Mr. *Hobbs*, after his usual confident way of Writing, affirms, *That the Romans made no scruple of Tolerating any Religion whatsoever within their City;* yet *Livy*, who certainly understood the State of *Rome* as well as Mr. *Hobbs*, gives us another account of it, both in its Monarchical and Aristocratical Government. While it was a Monarchy, *Numa Pompilius* instituted a Pontifex

Lev. p.  
57.

*isefex Maximus* or Chief-Priest, *Eiq;* *sacra omnia Scripta enſignataq;* attribuit, quibus *hoſtiis* —, And to him he committed all the ſacred Writings and Myſteries, and gave him order with what Sacrifices, and upon what Dayes, and in what Places the Rites of Religion were to be performed. Nay, the Hiſtorian proceeds, ſaying, That both the Publick and Private Myſteries were all determined by the Chief-Prieſt; that it might be known where the common People might repair to Worſhip their Gods. And all this was, *Ne quid divini Juris negligendo patrios ritus* — Leſt there ſhould be any Diſorder or Confuſion in Religion, either by neglecting the Sacred Rites of their Country, or introducing any that were Forreign and Strange. And in the time of the Conſulatory Government, after a great Drought and want of Rain, the Romans had not only their Bodies infected with ſome Contagious and Putrifying Diſeaſe, but their Minds with multiplicity of Superſtitious. And when the *Primores Civitatis*, the Nobles and Chieftains of their City heard of ſuch Novelties in Religion, and that thoſe who gained by them were moſt affected with them; they preſently iſſued out their Edicts to the

Liv. l. i.  
p. 15. Ed-  
it. Franc.

*Ædiles* (who were Officers appointed to look after the Publick Temples) that  
 Liv. l. 4. they would take care, *Ne qui, nisi Romani*  
 T33. *Dij, neu alio more quàm patrio colerentur,*  
*That none but the Roman Deities might be*  
*Worshipped; and that after no other man-*  
*ner, but that of their own Country.* So  
 jealous and careful were that Wise Peo-  
 ple, lest any Innovation should be made  
 in their Religion; and lest it's Uniformi-  
 ty and Integrity should be dissolved by the  
 Customs and Mixtures of other Coun-  
 tries. And *Grotius*, in the place before spe-  
 cified, observes how *St. Austin* was of Opi-  
 nion, that The-Almighty made the *Romans*  
 so victorious and successful in their Arms,  
 and permitted them thereby to enlarge  
 their Empire; because they had so hearty  
 a Respect and Veneration for Religion,  
 though it were a false One. And sure-  
 ly then, it would not be *against all the*  
*Rules and Forms of Justice, nor a Viola-*  
*tion of the Law and Light of Nature,* for  
 Christian Princes to be as Zealous for a  
 True Religion, as the Heathens were for a  
 False One.

Not were the *Gracians* less careful than  
 the *Romans* in this matter: For the fore-  
 cited Author observes, That Religion  
 was

was the cause of the *Peloponesian-Warr* between the *Athenians* and *Lacedemonians*; And of that also, raised by King *Philip* against the *Phocians*, for their Sacrilege in spoyling the Temple at *Delphos*. And it was called, The Holy - Warr; because it was in the Defence of Religion, and lasted for Ten Years; even so long, till all those Sacrilegious Persons were destroyed, who were the chief Authors of it.

And when *Protagoras* had only Written \* a Passage in one of his Books, which in this Nation would be accounted Modest, and the Property of a *Virtuoso*, in comparison of those Blasphemies and Contumelies, which are in all places belched-out against our Creator and Redeemer; yet the *Athenians* did not only burn the Book, but banish its Author out of the Walls of their City, and the Confines of their Common - Wealth. Neither did they shew less Zeal against *Alcibiades*, and some of his hot-spirited Complices, who had prophaned, in Mockery, the Mysteries of the *Athenian* Religion. Indeed, at first *Alcibiades* by his great Interest, was discharged of this Fault, and entrusted in the Affairs of the Common - Wealth; being

\*De Dijs,  
neq; ut  
sint, neq;  
ut non sint,  
habeo dicere.

Thucyd.  
lib. 6.

being sent upon The-Expedition into *Sicily*. But the State, considering that they could with no confidence expect Succels from the hands of so prohane a Person, in any Enterprize, till they had vindicated the Honour of their Gods; therefore they called *Alcibiades* Home, and chose rather to Examine the Fact, and try the Truth by Torments, than that any Man how good soever in the Fame and Estimation of others, being once Accused, should escape unquestion'd and unpunish'd.

But all these Instances of Heathen-Nations are nothing in comparison of the Zeal and Care had of Religion, by the Holy Kings and Governours of the *Jewish* Nation; which was accordingly approved and rewarded by God himself. It was this that ever pacified the Divine Justice, when it revealed its Wrath from Heaven; It was this that procured the Blessings of Heaven upon that peculiar and selected People. And, not to speak any thing of *Moses* and *Phineas*, *Joshua*, *Gideon*, *Elijah*, and *Jehu*, who derived upon themselves, and their Posterities, the Richest Blessings; and that no other way, but by their Activity and Zeal for Religion; for which they are Registered  
in



in the Sacred Scripture, by the Spirit of God Himself for their own Eternal Honour, and the Imitation and Encouragement of future Ages: I say, not to enlarge upon those preceding Instances, I shall present the Reader with some others: For to name All, would be to Transcribe a great part of the Historical Books of the Old Testament.

Suffice it first to consider *David*, who ordered the Turns and Courses of the *Levites* and Priests, and set up Musick in the Temple; and that without any Warrant or Commission, that can be found in Scripture, from God; going beyond the Pattern that was given by the Almighty to *Moses* in the Mount. 1 Chron. 23. 6.

*Asa* took away the Altars of the strange Gods, and the High-Places, and brake down the Images, and cut down the Groves; and commanded Judah to seek the Lord God of their Fathers, and to do the Law and the Commandments: And this he thought to be the most likely means for God (to whom it is nothing to help with many, or with them that have no Power) to make him and his People Victorious over that vast Host of the *Ethiopians*, that set themselves in Array against him. And 2 Chron. 14. 3—  
when

2 Chron.  
15. 12, 13.

when there were great Vexations upon all the Inhabitants of the Countries, and God did vex them with all Adversity; the most probable Method to establish Himself, and restore his People to their Pristine Glory, was, to Enter into a Covenant to seek the Lord God of their Fathers. And here he did not leave it to the Liberty of their own Consciences and Humours, whether they would do so or no; but he Decree'd, and bound himself by a solemn Oath, That *Who-ever would not seek the Lord God of Israel, should be put to Death, whether Small or Great, whether Man or Woman.* And the Blessing that ensued thereupon, is mentioned *vers. 15. viz. that The Lord was found of them, and gave them Rest round about; i. e.* They served God, and God preserv'd and prospered them.

2 Chron.  
17. 4, 5.

Let us next proceed to *Jehosaphat*, *Asa's* Successour; who was a Prince, Religious, and (that which ever concomitates Religion) Happy: For 'tis said, That he sought the Lord God — and walked in his Commandments; and 'tis added immediately, *Therefore the Lord Established the Kingdom in his Hand, and all Judah brought him Presents; and he had Riches and Honour in Abundance.* And he used

used his Coercive Power in taking away the High-Places and Groves, dedicated to Idolatry *Vers. 7.* For which very Act, God spared him, or else he had lost his Kingdom to *Jehu*, for joyning in Affinity with *Ahab*. And when he proceeded on in the Exercise of his Power, by sending Teachers, the Levites and the Priests, and the Chief of the Fathers of *Irael*, to instruct the People, he prospered. For although *Moab* and *Ammon* entred into his Kingdom, with a fearful Multitude (for so it must be, when he had above a Eleven Hundred Thousand Men on his own Side to assist him), yet upon his Proclaiming a Fast, and asking Help of the Lord, God Himself undertook his Protection, and fought his Battels; by causing a Spirit of Enmity to enter into the Host of his Enemies, that they spared *Jehosaphat* the trouble of Fighting with them, by destroying one another. *2 Chron. 19. 3.*

*Jehojada*, though he was no King, yet (as Sir *W. Rawleigh* observes) he was Buried among the Kings of *Judah*; as he well deserved, having preserved the Race of them, and restored the True Religion; which the late Prince of that House, by attempting to Eradicate, failed but a little of Rooting *2 Chron. 20. 23.*

*Hist. of W. Lib. 2. cap. 22. §. 2.*

*Rooting up themselves, and all their Issue.*  
 But as for the Good Man himself, he faithfully Governed the Kingdom, the whole time of the Young King's Minority; for there was not *only a Covenant made between him and the People, that they should be the Lords People*; but he shew'd his Zeal against the Idolatrous Worshipers of *Baal*, in killing his Priests, breaking down his Altar and Images, and putting *Athaliah* to Death, whose Ambition and Pride had been the Foundation of so much Mischief in Church and State.

But the Reformation of *Hezekiah* and *Josiah*, exceed all that ever was done in the Reign of preceding Princes. The first began his Reign, by opening the Doors of the Temple, which had been shut by *Abaz*; cleansing the City and Kingdom from Idols, restoring the Priests to their Offices and Estates, Reviving the Sacrifices which had been so long neglected, Celebrating the Passover with great Magnificence; and this and much more he did with all *his Heart, and prospered.* And although *Josiah* was very Young when he began to Reign, and found both Church and State polluted with all sorts of Idolatry and Wickedness; yet throughout  
 his

2 Chron.  
23. 16, 17.

2 Chron.  
29.

Cap. 30.

Cap. 31.

his whole Dominions, he destroyed the molten and graven Images, and all the Monuments of Idolatry; he rebuilt also, and repair'd the Temple; and did not only *make a Covenant with the Lord* in his own Person, but *caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it.* And which is yet farther observable in the Reign of this pious Prince, His devout Prayers and Reformation had that prevailing Power in them, as to prevent the Fall of that heavy Talent of Lead, which the Hand of God's enraged Justice was throwing down upon Judah, and the Inhabitants thereof. For there had been such a miserable Havock in the Church, by the Carelesness and Impiety of the two preceding Kings; such an Universal Toleration and Indulgence given to all sorts of Wickedness, that (to use the Prophet's Expression) Gods *Repentings were come to an End:* And when no one could prevail with Him for the Pardon of that condemned Nation, and he would be no more entreated; yet the Integrity of that Holy Prince procured a Reprieve. If we search the Annals of Time, and the Histories of all Ages, we shall find that Princes and People never more prospered,

*2 Chron.*  
34. 32.

*Jer. 50.*  
27.

*2 King.*  
22. 17.

pered, than when Religion prospered; and Idolatry was punish'd, and Schism discountenanc'd.

I am not ignorant of the Answers that are returned to these Instances. And indeed, What Truth is it, though never so convincing and perspicuous, but may be contradicted, and have an ill Gloss put upon it; nay, quite shaken and shattered by the Sceptical Reasonings of perverse and depraved Minds? Some would have all these Instances to be Typical: But this is to destroy a great part of the Old-Testament; and turn it, with the *Anabaptists*, and other *Enthusiasts*, into the Types of our own fond Fancies. None ever yet could tell what such Coercive Power was Prefigurative of. And the Actual Exercise of such Civil Power is now as necessary in these times of the Gospel, as ever it was under the Law. Others would have all the preceding Instances of those Heroick Acts, not to proceed from any general Commission granted by God, but from immediate Inspiration given to themselves: But, this is only barely affirmed, but never proved. I am sure, 'tis more probable, that many of the fore-mentioned Princes were never Inspired through  
the

the whole course of their Lives, than that they had any such Honour and Privilege bestowed upon them. The Scripture is wholly silent in the business. And common Prudence would enable and direct them to engage in many of those Actions, without any extraordinary Inspiration from the Holy Spirit.

But I hope both these Answers will prove but the Evasions of a baffled Cause; if it can be proved from the Writings of the Old - Testament, that the Co-ercive Power of the Magistrate was not to be confined to the narrow Boundaries of the *Jewish-Church*, or the Land of *Palestine*; but that the like Power was to be exercised by Kings and Potentates, when the Church became Christian. And (by the way) if it was not; Princes would have been in a worse Condition by the Coming of Christ, and by embracing the Christian Faith, than when they continued *Jews*, or *Heathens*. For, while they continued so, they might lawfully exercise a Co-ercive Power in the Concerns of Religion, as hath been sufficiently evinc'd in the fore-mentioned Instances. But if they were to lay aside that Power when they embraced Christianity, the chief Jewel in  
D their

their Imperial Crowns was taken from them; and their Religion did not confirm but diminish their precedent Rights.

- But the continuation of their Coercive Power appears plainly from that \*place of the Evangelical Prophet, which has been of late urged, but never Answered by the Opposers of Magistracy. There, God gives as great Demonstrations of his infinite Care and Love unto His Church, as we shall find in any one place of the Old-Testament: For he sayes, That a Woman may sooner with-draw *her Compassion from the son of her Womb, than he would forget his Church*: That he hath *graven her on the Palms of his Hands*; That her *Wasters and Destroyers should go forth of her*: That She should be so enlarged by the Accession of the *Gentiles* to her, that her Place should be too *narrow and strait* for her Converts: And (that which is the Top-Stone of all her Glory) he promises, *Kings shall be thy Nursing-Fathers, and Queens thy Nursing-Mothers*. In which Words, God does not only secure his Church in the Beneficence and Protection of Kings; but he secures Kings also, in their Antient Privileges and Rights, For, How can that
- Pro-



Promise receive its Accomplishment, if Kings are destitute of Power to protect Religion, and punish those that would subvert its Profession within their Empires and Dominions? Those are strange Nurses, that must permit their Children to do what they will, and live how they list; and suffer them as freely to feed upon Poyson, as upon the *Rational sincere* and immixed *Milk* of Christian Doctrine and Instructions: Such are no better Nurses than *Romulus* and *Remus* had, who Suck'd no other than a Wolfe, whose Fury and Hunger might rather prompt him to devour than nourish them.

λογικὸν  
ἀδολογόν  
γάλα.  
1 Pet. 2.  
2.

There are \*Expositors of great Learning and Fame, who conceive this Prophecie to be fulfilled, when Emperours and Kings became Christians, and enacted Laws to secure the Faith of Christ from all Enemies, that either opposed and corrupted its Truths, broke and dissolved its Unity, or Apostatized from its Profession.

\* Terinuz;  
&c.

To mention all the Laws that were enacted for the sake of Religion by Christian Kings and States, would make these Papers look rather like a History, than a short Answer to the *Queries*. Suffice it, to acquaint

Euseb.  
vic. Const.  
l. 3. c. 61.

Reader, That *Constantine* banish'd *Arians*, and his Followers; that he burnt his Books, and threatned those with the same Punishments, that would not Subscribe to the Decrees of the Council of *Nice*. After which, he made a Law against the *Novatians*, *Valentinians*, with other Hereticks and Schismaticks of that time, which is too long to be inserted in these Papers.

*Gratian*, *Valentinian*, and both the *Theodosij*, proceeded after the very same manner against the *Arians*; prohibiting their Meetings, and interdicting them the Exercise of their Ministry: The very same Emperours, as likewise, *Arcadius*, *Anastasius*, and *Justinian*, made severe Laws against the *Manichees*, *Apollinarians*, *Montanists*, *Priscillianists*, *Donatists*, &c. forbidding them to preach either in Churches, or private Houses, under pain of the Confiscation of the Places where they were Assembled: And besides great Sums of Money that were to be forfeited to the Emperour and President, they were to lose all their Goods and Liberties, Offices and Titles: They were to inherit

Cod. Theod.  
lib. 16.  
T. 1.

no Lands; They were permitted neither to Buy nor Sell, make Wills nor Codicils:

dicils: Their Profelytes also, and those that favoured their Tenents, and entertained their Persons, were to be Excommunicated, and look'd upon as Infamous, if they did not submit and conform within the space of one Year. All Admission to any publick Offices, Councils, Debates, and Elections, was denyed them; neither was their Testimony receivable in any Court, or before any Magistrate. And if any convicted Heretick gathered Churches, then, *ut seditionis Auctores, pacisq; turbata Ecclesia* — they were to be proceeded against, and punished as Authors of Sedition, and Disturbers of the Publick and the Churches Peace. The same Emperours also made Laws against falling away from Christianity to Paganism, Heresie, and Judaism; and inflicted the punishments before specified, upon such Apostates from the Faith. And the very Oath that the Magistrates sware under the Emperour *Justinian*, was, That they would maintain Religion and Justice according to their Power; and, in case they omitted their Duty, they wish'd to themselves by way of Execration, the Trembling of *Cain*, the Leprosie of *Gehazi*, and the Lot of *Judas*.

Nor were these just Laws, and zealous Proceedings, without those good Effects, which the Authors proposed to themselves in the enacting of them: For many of the Heresies were not only suppressed and destroyed; but not a few of the Hereticks themselves, Retracted their Errors and Opinions, and became Orthodox and real Converts to the Truth.

The *Donatists* were a Sect proud and seditious; and so very like those among our selves, which we call *Independents*, that they may as truly be said to be Brethren, as *Romulus* and *Remus* that Suck'd their Principles from the same Woolf. And the Emperours of those Ages, inflicted upon them Capital Punishments; which proceedings, St. *Austin*, a Person of a mild Temper, as well as of a Holy Life, defended and justified. For, although he had been once of the Opinion, That no Coercive Power was to be used in Religion; yet he afterwards Retracted it, when he saw that the Schisms and Mischiefs, occasioned by that busie and subtle Sect, could not possibly be suppressed, but by the Execution of the severest Laws. For, he makes this Ingenuous Acknowledgment; *There are two Books of mine, Entitled,*

titled, *Contra partem Donati*; In the first of which I affirmed, That Schismatics ought not to be violently driven to the Publick Assemblies, by the Force of secular Power. Which Method did not then please me; because I had not then Experience, how much Mischief they were emboldened to commit, by reason of their Impunity; or how conducive the Exercise of careful Discipline might be to transform them into better Manners. And in one of his Epistles he says, That although the whole City, in which he presided, took part with Donatus; yet it was converted to the Catholick Unity, by the Fear of the Imperial Laws.

Retract.  
l. 5 c. 2.

Epist. 48.

And therefore, very Remarkable are those excellent Words of that Holy Father, concerning the Duty of Kings; *In hoc (sicut iis divinitus precipitur) Reges Deo serviunt in quantum Reges, si in suo Regno bona jubeant, mala prohibeant, non solum quæ pertinent ad Humanam Societatem, verum etiam quæ ad Divinam Religionem: In this, Kings (as it is commanded them from Heaven) serve God in that Office, when in their Kingdoms they command what is Good, and prohibit what is Evil; and that not only in things that belong to Human Society, but also unto Di-*

Aug.  
Contr.  
Cresco.  
Gram. lib.  
3. c. 51.

*vine Religion.* There are many more Passages in the Writings of *St. Austin* to the same purpose, which are too numerous and large to be Transcrib'd. Suffice it to acquaint the Reader, that the very same Objections which the *Socinians* and *Independents* urge against the Magistrates Coercive Power, were in the Dayes of that excellent Father made use of by *Petilian* the *Donatist*; and the sum of them amounted to this, *That no Man was to be compelled to the Faith; and that Religion was not to be chosen, but out of Freedom of Will.* Which Arguments are at large Answered by that Good and Holy Man. And therefore, 'tis Matter of Wonder and Amazement, that a very Learned Man, in *A Tract concerning Schism*, should make such unworthy Reflections upon *St. Austin*: For, speaking concerning the Schism of the *Donatists*, and the Opposition that that Father made against them, he says, *That the Truth was there, where it was, by meer Chance; and might have been on either side, the Reason brought by either Party notwithstanding: For though it were de facto false, that Pars Donati shut up in Affrick, was the only Orthodox Party; yet it might be true, notwithstanding*

ding any thing St. Austin brings to Confute it: And, on the contrary, though it were de facto true, that the part of Christians dispersed over the whole Earth, were Orthodox; yet it might have been false, notwithstanding any thing St. Austin brings to Confirm it.

But who-ever will be at the pains to peruse the Writings of that Father against the *Donatists*, will find, that he was an able Disputant, as well as a great Writer; and as well knew how to Confute Error, as establish and clear the Truth. I could tire the Patience of the Reader, with Authorities out of his writings, to show how much that Learned Man is mistaken in his own Opinion, concerning him: But I have too far Digress'd already. Suffice it, that he with many others of the Antients, owns and proves the Magistrate's Coercive Power in the Concerns of Religion. And as a very excellent \* Person observes, He with many others of the Learned Fathers, liv'd in the time of *Theodosius the Great*: And that is the Age, which our Church of England, since our Reformation, comes nearest to: Idolatry being then suppressed by the Imperial Edicts, the Church settled by Law under the Government of Bishops, Publick Liturgies appointed, Antiquity reverenc'd,

\*Dr. Stillingfleet's  
Epistle,  
Dedicated to the  
Bish. of  
London.

verenced, Learning encouraged, and some few Ceremonies used; but without any of those corrupt Mixtures, which afterwards prevailed in the Roman Church. And that I may a little vary the Words of that incomparable Writer; who-ever suspects that St. *Austin*, St. *Ambrose*, &c. are either Enemies to the Power of Godliness, or indiscreet Contenders for a Spiritual Tyranny to be exercised in Matters of Religion, by Civil or Ecclesiastical Governours; he never knew what Godliness or Government meant.

I hope now it appears to be *no Violation of the Law or Light of Nature, to inflict Punishments in matters of Religion*. I am sure, our Ancestors (who perhaps will be thought by Posterity, to have had as much Wisdom and Religion too, as the present Age) had other Opinions concerning this Matter. For the first Parliament of Queen *Elizabeth* made a Statute (which Sr. *Robert Cotton* affirms to be one of the best Laws that ever was made in England) for the Levying of 12 d. every Sunday and Holy-day upon all Persons, that could not give a reasonable Excuse for their Absence from their Parish-Church. And immediately after the en-

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naſting of the Penalty, there are theſe excellent and remarkable Words — *And for the due Execution hereof, the Queens moſt excellent Majeſty, the Lords Spiritual, and all the Commons in this preſent Parliament Aſſembled, do in Gods Name earneſtly require and charge all Arch-Biſhops, Biſhops, &c. that they ſhall endeavour themſelves to the utmoſt of their Knowledges; that the due and true Execution hereof may be had throughout their Dioceſſes and Charges; as they will answer before God for ſuch Evils and Plagues, where-with Almighty God may juſtly puniſh his People for neglecting this good and wholeſome Law.* And notwithstanding the zealous pleadings of Independents againſt the Magiſtrates Coercive Power in Religious matters, in this Kingdom; yet they themſelves exerciſe it after the moſt violent manner in *New-England*: For they have not only baniſh'd *Antinomians*, and put *Quakers* to Death; but impoſe a Penalty of five Shillings every Lords-Day, upon all that do not come to Hear their Preaching. I conclude my Answer to this Query, in the Words of Mr. Calvin, *There are none plead againſt the Magiſtrates Coercive Power, and Sword of Juſtice, but thoſe who*

1 Queen  
Eliz. c. 2.

Præſt.  
in Dan.  
c. 4.

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out of a Consciousness of their own Heresies, Schisms, and Misdeeds, are in danger, and afraid of suffering by it: And therefore, would wrest the Sword out of the Magistrates Hand, that they might persevere in their Heresies, Schisms, Blasphemies, and Offences, without Punishment, and Remorse.

Quer. 8. Whether it be not Incongruous, and Heterogeneous, to punish Corporally, Men erring Spiritually.

Gal. 5.  
20.

1 Cor. 5.  
3, 4.

Ans. No Judge or Justice, no Minos or Rhadamanthus, can take Cognizance of any Man's Conscience, or Internal Thoughts. But when Wickedness in the Heart breaks out into open Speeches, and external Actions, the Criminal then makes himself lyable to the Magistrates Power and Inspection. St. Paul reckons Heresies among the *Works of the Flesh*: And when he blames the *Corinthians* for those Schisms, and Disorders, which they permitted and practised in their Church; he tells them, They were *Carnal*, and walk'd as Men. And certainly, any Sensual Sin may be punish'd by the Civil Sword. And those who gather Churches, and despise Govern-

Government, and trample upon all Laws, are more than Spiritually Erroneous. The Enticers to Idolatry might as well have pleaded the Incongruity of the Magistrates procedure against them, by saying, It was only the Errour of their Minds, as any of the Dissenting Ministers; But they were Corporally punish'd, that all Israel might hear and fear, and do no more any such Wickedness, as that was among them.

Deut. 13.

ver. 11.

Quer. 9. Whether secular Force and Compulsion in Things of Divine and Supernatural Revelation, be not the Arms of Anti-Christ, and not of the True Church.

Ans. The use of secular Force and Compulsion towards Jews or Pagans in Matters of Religion, is Anti-Christian, and a Violation of the Law of Nations. The Spaniard, instigated by the Jesuite, was highly Guilty of this, against the poor Indians. For 'tis certain, that no Mans Unbelief do's make him forfeit Propriety; that being acquired either by a Civil or Natural Right, and not founded in Religion; as is evident from the case of Ananias and Saphira, Act. 5. And therefore,

fore, it was a Canon in an Antient Council, That no one should be constrained to Embrace the True Faith. And Tertullian says, That 'tis not Religion to compel Religion, *Quæ spontè suscipi debet non vi, Which ought to be received by a free Will, and not by Force of Arms.* And Lactantius, *Quid jam ulterius relinquitur, si etiam hoc quod voluntate fieri oportet, libido extoruet aliena? What remains to us, if another Mans Lust extort that by Force, which we ought most willingly to perform?* Which Passages, with many more that might be presented to the Reader, declare the Opinions of Fathers against that practise of Princes, who raise Wars against Pagan-Nations, to compel and force them to the Profession of Christianity, and Embracing of the Gospel. But these things nothing concern a Kingdom, in which there is a visible and universal Profession of the same Religion. There, Magistrates may use Compulsive Methods, to secure their People from a total and manifest Apostacy from the true Faith; and repress such Seducers as do threaten either the Extirpation of that, or their own Government. And this is no more, than what the most Religious

Ad Scapul.

Instit. l. 3. c. 14.

gious Princes have assumed to themselves, by God's Warrant and Approbation in the Jewish Church, as I have before undeniably Evinced: The Religion of which Church, was as *Divine* and *Supernatural*, as that of Christians. For the Substance of both Religions was the same; the *Jews* believing in Christ, who was to come; and We believing in Him, as already manifested in the Flesh.

Quer. 10. *Whether any one can be compelled by secular Force, and Compulsion, to perform any Divine Duty acceptably; since God accepts not of any, but what is Voluntary, and of Faith, which cannot be forced? And of what use then is secular Force and Compulsion in Religion, but to make Men sin and suffer?*

Ans. This Query, as well as many others, is forged in the Shops of the *Socinians* and *Anabaptists*; and might with as much strength of Reason be urged against the Magistrates using Compulsive Methods towards his Subjects, for the performance of the Duties of the Second Table, as those of the First. 'Tis true, no Human Power can command any more,  
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than the out-ward Duty; nor forbid any more, than the out-ward Act. And when the King forbids his Subjects, Murther, Theft, &c. or commands them to be Loyal, Just, &c. neither Abstinence from those Sins, nor practising of those Vertues, is any farther acceptable to God, than both do proceed from the Internal Powers of the Mind, and out of an awful Regard and Fear to the Divine Majesty. But, Must not therefore Authority oblige Men to be Loyal and Peaceable, Honest and Just, and punish them if they be Rebellious and Seditious, Injurious and Thieves, because by *secular Force* they cannot make them either perform those Duties, or abstain from those Sins, *acceptably*? 'Tis true, Religion is seated and produced in the Soul, by the inward Conviction and Illumination of the Mind, and not by the Compulsion of the Body. But then the outward performance of Service unto God, by those who own any such Being, or profess any Religion, is subject to the Power and Cognizance of the Magistrate: If it were not, Men might Act those things in despite of Authority, which might both dishonour and destroy Government.

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Every King is both the Minister of God, and the Ruler of his People. As he is the first; he is obliged by all the Bonds of Piety and Gratitude, to take care that God, from whom he derives his Authority, be solemnly Worshipt within his Dominions, As he is the Second, he is bound to punish either the Neglects of publick Worship, or the Corruptions and false Acts of it; because they have an ill Influence upon the Practises, and are offensive to the Minds of his Loyal and Pious Subjects.

No doubt, but one main Ingredient that makes our Services acceptable to God, is, our Willingness to perform them, and to approve our Hearts to Him in the well-doing of them. But our Governours are not so much to consider our Willingness, as our Benefit, and their own Duty. And perhaps, it will be found as great an Act of Justice and Charity, to force some Men to go to Church, as 'tis to force some Boys to go to School; who are at last brought in Love with their Books, more by the severity of the Rod, than by the persuasions of the Master. And as the Magistrate will find the Benefit by exercising his Coercive Power,

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in securing the Honour of his own Laws and Authority ; so will the Persons also, upon whom such Methods are used ; for, 'tis far better for Men to come within the possibility of being perswaded to Religion, and reduced to sober Apprehensions of it ; than to continue in their Schisms, or in a voluntary Neglect of all Piety. Suppose the worst, *viz.* That the compelling Men to Church, do not produce any inward Change in their Minds ; yet certainly, 'tis a Means conducive to so blessed an End. And although it doth them no good, yet it is of great use to Religion ; the Honour of which, is secured better by Hypocrisie, than Atheism. But, 'tis more than probable, that such forcible Methods will be of great advantage to all sorts of Men : for so they will be, if People are but Externally Reformed by them ; and a Restraint be laid upon their sensual Appetites, that they do not act those Abominable Lusts, which are now become so Modish and Epidemical among us. And by this way, the Nation's as well as God's Honour, would be secured ; and Men would receive far more Benefit, than to be *settled upon their Lees* ; and be permitted to proceed on

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in an open Defiance of all Piety, and a scornful Contempt of the Church, and Institutions of Christ. *Ababs* External Humiliation was so acceptable to God, that <sup>1 King. 21.</sup> he revok'd his Denounced Judgments, and did not bring the Evil which was Threatned against him in his Dayes. And if by severe Laws a stop were put to those gross Schisms, and that bare-fac'd Atheism (with other Villanies) that abound amongst us, and Seducers were restrained from propagating their contagious Errors; it would be more *acceptable* to God, and all good Men, and less dishonourable too, unto the Kingdom, than those lawless and licentious Practises which are Universally pleaded for, and palliated over with the specious Pretences to Liberty of Conscience. In a word, There are other uses of secular Force and Compulsion in Religion, than what relate to the Persons themselves, upon whom they are us'd. For if Men are so perverse and incorrigible, as not to be Reform'd themselves; yet the Punishments that are inflicted upon them, may prevent the like Sin in others. So true is that of *Seneca*, *In vindicandis injurijs, hac tria Lex secuta est, qua princeps quoq; sequi debet: ut aut eum*

Lib. 1 de Clement. cap. 22.

*quem punit emendet, ut aut pœna ejus ceteros meliores reddat, aut ut sublati malis securiores ceteri vivant.* Upon which Words Mr. Calvin thus comments, *Corrigendi sunt pœnâ, qui aliâ ratione in viam reduci nequeunt, ne fiant effrantes licentiâ & Corruptiores.* Those are to be punish'd, who will not by any other means be brought unto their Duty; lest they become more unruly and corrupt in their licentious Practises by Impunity.

*Quer. II. Whether Christs Rule of his Disciples under the Gospel, be not by a Spiritual Power? and, Whether to use the Temporal Sword in Religious Matters, be not to make the Weapons of the Gospel not mighty through God, but mighty through the Magistrates Power; & to Arm the Church with Weapons Christ never gave Her, and to make her a Military, rather than a Spiritual Society?*

*Ans. What is mighty through the Power of the Lawful Magistrate, is mighty through God: For he is God's Minister, and that to the benefit and well-fare of Mens Souls, as well as their worldly and outward Estates. 'Tis true, Christ never made use of the Civil Magistrates Power,*

Power to recommend or obtrude His Doctrine upon the unbelieving World. For, the Secular Powers were all the Dayes of his Flesh, in open Enmity and Hostility against Him. And He was Armed with such miraculous Power from Heaven, that He did not need any Assistance from Empires or States. But from hence to argue against the Churches making use of the Authority of Kings in the Affairs of Religion would be as absurd and inconsequent, as to say, That Church-Men ought not to use the Magistrates help against Thieves and Murtherers, because Christ never Appealed, or required his assistance to punish any such Criminals. 'Tis certain, that our blessed Saviour in Erecting His Church, never intended to diminish or destroy the Power of Magistracy; but rather to preserve it inviolate, by Enacting those Laws of Meekness and Loyalty, Humility and Obedience, by which Superiours should be secured in their Royalties and Prerogatives, and Subjects in their Privileges and Birth-Rights. The Church is a Military Society, and every Christian is a good Soldier of Jesus Christ; and what the Weapons of their Warfare is,

shall be shewed in the *Answer* to the next *Query*.

**Qu. 12.** *Whether to say, The Spiritual Power, Christ hath given unto his Church for the right ordering and governing thereof, is not sufficient to the End, without the Aid and Assistance of the Secular Power, be not to Blaspheme?*

*Ans.* The end of Christ's giving Power to his Church is the Edification (not Destruction) of the Souls of His People. But to permit Men to Renounce the common Christianity, and to be of such curious and itching Ears, as to heap to themselves false-Teachers, that shall lead them in the paths of Heresie and Schism, and destroy the Unity of the Church; this is a betraying of that *Depositum* which Christ has left with its Governours and Guides; and that which no Christian King or Bishop can Answer at the great and dreadful Tribunal; 'Tis a gratifying of the old Serpent in his malicious Wiles and Methods; and giving leave to his Instruments to accomplish their Hellish Designs, in destroying Christianity, and the Churches Government, at one Blow.

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God's Name is not *Blasphemed*, but His Institutions honoured, when they are made use of to uphold His Truths; and to secure unto Him a People zealous in the Profession of His Gospel, and performing of His Will. His Name is rather Blasphemed amongst us, when mens Minds are alienated from the Christian Religion, and the Profession of it is made arbitrary in a Nation, where it hath been acknowledged and embraced for so many Centuries of Years, and where it would continue to the Worlds Dissolution, were it not in the Power of every heated Brain, and sulphurous Male-content, either to serve God, or serve Him not; either to adhere to the Church in which he was Baptized, or renounce it; either to believe in Christ, or openly deny and Blaspheme Him. But what-ever becomes of the common Christianity in these Distracted and divided Kingdoms, God forbid! that ever its Extirpation should be charged by God upon the Governours of the Church. May their Labours and Endeavours to continue these Islands in the Christian Faith, be like those of the Primitive Bishops and Apostles, *viz.* a sweet Savour and Perfume to God in them that

*perish, as well as in them that believe, and are saved.*

It is one thing to Convert *Pagans* and Infidels to Christianity, and another thing to keep those within the Bounds of their Duty that do already profess so excellent a Religion. The first is only to be done by the Ministry of the Church, by Gentle and Moral Means and Methods, by sound Preaching, devout Prayers, holy Living and perswasive Arguments. But when Men have given up their Names to Christ, 'tis certainly the Duty of Church-Men to use all lawful Means, to prevent their Apostacy from Him. And when neither Intreaties nor Prayers, Instructions nor Censures, will produce any good Effect upon Incurable Offenders, why may not the Assistance of the Magistrate be requested to save a Soul from Death, and Rescue him out of the Snare of the Devil.

Indeed, in the Primitive and purest Ages of the Church, there was no need that its Acts and Censures should be seconded by the Sword of the Secular Power: For then, the Sentence of Excommunication had such dreadful Effects attending of it, that Offenders were immediately

ately convinced of their Sins and Follies, and reduced to Repentance and Reformation. For, upon the pronouncing of that dreadful Sentence, the Guilt of their Souls was presently discernible in some heavy Judgment or other, that was inflicted upon their Bodies. And this is evident not only from some of the Primitive Writers of the Church, but from the Holy Scriptures themselves: For there we may easily perceive how the Defect of the Magistrates Coercive Power was miraculously supply'd from Heaven; and that not only in the Incestuous *Corinthian*, 1 Cor. 5. who was *delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the Flesh*; but in *Ananias* Act. 5. and *Saphira*, who were immediately struck dead for *Lying unto the Holy-Ghost*; and in *Elimas the Sorcerer*, who was struck blind for *perverting the right Wayes of God*, and attempting to *turn away the Deputy from the Faith*. Act. 13. But to conclude the Answer to this Query; When ever Dissenters have any Penalty inflicted on them beyond that of Excommunication, 'tis because they endanger the Peace of the State, by disobeying the Laws of the Church: For the Interest of both those Societies are so twisted and united, that like *Hippocrates's*

*tes's Twins, they Laugh and Weep, Live and Dye, both together.*

*Qu. 13. Whether the Carnal Conjunction of the Temporal Power with the Spiritual, hath not made all Ecclesiastical Regiment odious and unsavoury, and serv'd only to enable the Clergy under the pretext of the Power of the Gospel, to trample, by the Power of the World, Man-kind under their Feet?*

*Ans. There is no more Carnality in the Union of the Civil Power with the Ecclesiastick, in these Dayes of the Gospel, than there was when they supported each other, and were united under the Law: Then Moses and Aaron (to produce no other Instances) went hand in hand together; The one as a Prince, and a Leader; the other as a Priest of the People: Both of them instructed them in the Wayes of God, and secured them in their Obedience, that they might not return to Egypt. Both of them prevented the Erection of that Democracy, or rather Anarchy, that was attempted by Core, and his Complices, Numb. 16. when they pleaded, That Moses and Aaron took too  
much*



much upon them, seeing all the Congregation was Holy every one of them, and the Lord was among them. There is not the least doubt from the Text, but the Conjunction of those excellent Persons in Counsel and Authority, to protect and secure the *Israelites* in their Obedience to God, was the main Cause of the Revolt and Insurrection of those Rebels. And, that they might the better palliate over their Rebellion, and make the Government of those two Chieftains hateful and unfavoury; they strengthened their Interests not only by Courting and Caressing the meanest of the People; but by bringing over to their Parry 250 *Princes of the Assembly, famous in the Congregation, and Men of Honour and Reputation*: Such as bore Offices in their Tribes; and were obliged by the Bonds of Honour, as well as the Oaths of God, to secure the People in their Duty, and not to side with factious and seditious Spirits against the Government of Church and State. But surely, the Assistance given by *Moses* to *Aaron*, did not incite or enable the Lords Priest to trample upon the People. And there is a great deal less probability and danger from the Countenance

nance that the present Clergy have from Princes, and great Personages, than there was at that time; or indeed, in any Age, since the Empire became Christian. For now, Ministers are made the very formal Cause of the Hatred and Contempt of too many Persons. But they may comfort themselves in this, That the same Fate has happened to others far better, and more deserving, than themselves. 'Tis well known who were accounted the Filth and Off-scouring of the World: And 'tis some satisfaction to tread in their Steps, and tast of their Cup; and be trampled on, and scorn'd by those Persons, that have nothing else to Recommend them to the World, but Dung and Impudence.

*Qu. 14. Whether to force and compel Men in the Worship and Service of God, to Act against their Light and Judgments, be not a Spiritual Rape upon their Consciences.*

*Ans.* This *Query*, as well as many others, is meerly Sceptical; and is fully Answered in the Seventh: But I shall a little more consider it; because it makes Conscience, whether Erroneous or not  
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Erroneous, to be the only Rule of Mens Faith and Practises. The main Argument with which the Libertines of all Ages, have sheltered themselves against the reach of wholsom and good Laws, has been Conscience, and the Internal Liberty of that Faculty; which (say they) is only and immediately Subject unto God. A Spirit may be as soon pierced with a Sword, as Violence can be offered to the Conscience, or the Mind constrained to understand, to Fear, Love, Hate, &c. For all those are the Elicite Acts of the Soul, and flow from no other Principle, than its own Internal and Natural Inclinations. And the Soul's Elicite Acts cannot be forc'd or violated by all the Compulsive Powers in the World.

But all this signifies very little in the present Debate: For no Authority ever offered any Violence to the Internal Acts of Mens Minds. So long as Fire is kept within the Chimney, and does not flame out into other Parts of the House, no one is very solicitous to extinguish it. And when Mens Opinions are recluded and lockt within their own Brests, [and are not vented to proselyte others, or disturb the publick Peace, the Magistrate never  
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Rom. 14.  
22.

concerns himself about them. But when Men are not content to observe that Rule of the Apostle, *of having or keeping their Faith and Opinions to themselves*, the Magistrate is not then to consult Mens private Consciences; but the Honour of God, the safety of his own Person and Government, and his Peoples Benefit and Good. Nay, in the exercising of his Coercive Power, he may do as much Good upon those that Err, as to others that may possibly be enticed to Error. For it may be a greater sin for a Man to Act according to the Dictates of his Conscience, than to Act against them. This is evident not only from the Experience of all Ages, but from the Holy Scriptures, which speak of a *seared Conscience*, of Men *whose Consciences are defiled*, of a *Reprobate Mind*, &c. And Christ tells his Apostles, That the *Time would come*, when Men should have such perverted Apprehensions of Things, as not only to think it lawful, but acceptable Service to God, to kill Christians, and take away their Lives. And if the *Jewish Sanhedrim* could have laid any thing to the charge of St. Peter, and St. John, whereby they could have taken away their Lives, no doubt but they

Joh. 16.  
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they would have done it; as appears from *Act. 4. 21.* And in the doing of it, they would have thought themselves free from all Guilt in violating the Sixth Commandment. Lastly, *St. Paul* had Conscience to plead for him, when he persecuted, and made Havock of the Church; For, *he thought, i. e.* he was fully perswaded in his own Conscience, that *he ought to do* *Act. 26. 9.* *many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth.* Well may the Magistrate then punish many Men, when they act according to their Consciences. For, suppose there had been a Christian Magistrate in *St. Pauls* Journey to *Damascus*, that had taken and Imprison'd him; and afterwards, according to the Forms of Justice, had deprived him of his Life, for the Mischief he had done to the poor Christians: Had this been to *commit a Rape* upon *St. Pauls Conscience*? I know very well, that it will be here said, That such a Magistrate might punish him for Murther, and violating the Laws of the Second Table. But the Answer to this is easie, if I should say, That just so our Magistrates do, when they Execute any of the Penal Statutes upon Dissenters. But to give a farther Answer: It is a very

ry strange thing for any one to believe, That the Magistrate is invested with Power to punish Men for Words and Actions, when they tend to the Dammage of private Persons, or endanger the Commonwealth; *e.g.* He may punish Men if they take false Oaths, and shed innocent Blood, and blast the Honour of great Persons, &c. but let them speak never so many Lyes in the Name of God, and Preach and Teach them in Hypocrisie; let them • Blaspheme God and Christ, and Religion, then Authority has its Hands ty'd up; no Coercive Power must be used against any such Criminals; for all those acts flow from Conscience: They are the inward Acts and Perswasions of Mens Minds; the Freedom of which, ought not to be violated by any vindictive Methods. In a word, every Christian is to Act out of a Principle of Conscience, in the Duties of the Second Table, as well as in those of the First. So that, if Conscience be a sufficient Plea against the Coercive Power of Kings, they ought not to Enact any Penal Laws against Murder, Felony, &c. any more than against Infidelity, Schism, Heresie, &c. for Conscience is equally concern'd in the Duties  
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of both Tables; and the Magistrates Coercive Power may as Rationally upon that account, be denied in one, as the other.

Qu. 15. *Whether to require Conformity in Practise, where there is difference in Judgment, be not to command a Man to act against his Light and Conscience, and consequently to sin?*

Ans. I may Answer this Query with another; and that is by asking, Whether the Superiour may not take care to act according to the Dictates of his Conscience, as well as the Inferiour to practise according to his? For, surely, there is no Magistrate in the World, who retains any Sense of his Duty, and considers the account that he must give to Him, by whom Kings Reign, and Princes decree Justice; but must believe it as much his Duty to make those under his Charge to serve God, as they can conceive it their Duty to serve him in such Wayes and Methods, as are diametrically contrary to Gods Will, and subversive to the Magistrate's Government. As a Dissenter may be perswaded in his Con-

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science, That he ought not to Conform; so a Governour may be perswaded in his Conscience, That such a Person ought to be punish'd: And there is as much reason that a Superiour should prescribe to his Subject, as the Subject to his Superiour: For the Superiour's Conscience is as certain a Rule in Commanding, as the Inferiour's can be to him in Disobeying. And this is the Case between the King of *England*, and the present Dissenters from the Church: For, in the Coronation-Oath, the King Swears *That he will Defend and Preserve to the Clergy, all Canonical Priviledges, and free Franchises, granted to them by the glorious King St. Edward, and other Kings.* How this Oath can be performed, if the Church be exposed to the Inrodes of all Seducers, is past my Power to conceive or determine. Every Prince owes a strict account to God of his Crown and Government; and the Dignity of his Place obliges him to promote the Happines of his People; which he does not, if he permit every one to do that which is seemly in his own Eyes.

But to dismiss the Obligation that lies on Magistrates, and to consider whether  
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Difference in Judgment will justify any Man from Inconformity in Practice: And to do this, let the Reader peruse what St. John says in his *Revelation*, concerning one of the Angels of the Seven Churches. All sound Expositors look upon those Angels to be Bishops: But let them be called by the Name of Bishops or Ministers; one of them is called, by Christ, to a strict account *for suffering* Rev. 2. *that Woman Jezabel to teach and seduce* 20. *his Servants.* Now, I would be resolved, Whether the Bishop or *Angel* might not have excused his own Neglects, by pleading for *Jezabel*; That her Judgment differed from his; that she Acted according to her Conscience; and to make her practise things quite contrary to her Judgment, was that which Christ never did Himself, in the Days of his Flesh: It was an Invasion of the Freedom of Mens Wills, and the Liberty of their Consciences; It was a constraining of them to *Act against their own Light, and consequently to sin.* But no such Reply is made to our Saviours Reproof. And Mr. Perkins (who, I presume, may be esteem'd a Person of as tender Principles, as any of our present Dissenters) makes this use

of the preceding Instance. Hence (sayes he) we may gather, that every Man is not to be left to his own Conscience, to Teach and Hold what Doctrines he will: But all such Men or Women as teach Erroneous Doctrines, by the Governours of the Church are to be restrained. It is a grievous fault in any Church, not to Restraine the Authors and Maintainers of Sects, and false Doctrines, and of Opinions, which stand not with the Truth of Gods Word: And, on the contrary, 'tis a Vertue, and good Gift in any Church, when they Restraine the Authors and Favourers of Sects, and false Doctrines. And in this Respect, our Church is to be commended and approved, and the Common-Wealth likewise, for making Laws to restrain both Popish Recusants, and some Protestants who depart from our Church; as being no Church of God, but a Member of Anti-Christ and Babylon: So far that good Man. I could Transcribe much more out of his Works; but he who will be farther satisfy'd, may consult his Commentary upon Gal. 6. 12. and many other Passages in his Writings; where he plainly delivers his Judgment, That People ought to be Compelled to the Publick Assemblies. And indeed, if our Gover-

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nours require Conformity to those things, which the Judgments of Inferiours disapprove and dislike; 'tis no more than what every Man sees done dayly, when most Persons are constrained to do what is honest and just against their own Wills and Interests. 'Tis certain, that nothing can excuse Subjects from yielding Obedience to lawful Authority, but the unlawfulness of what that Authority does injoyn. And if any thing be enjoyned, which is disliked by the Subjects Judgment; this is no Violence offered to his Conscience: For, a Man may lawfully engage upon that Action, which in his own Judgment, he conceives to be unmeet, and inconvenient. For, so long as a Man's Judgment retains an Opinion, That the thing he is commanded to do is indifferent; he may safely engage in the Action, though he has some inward Averseness and Reluctancy in his Mind, against what is enjoyned him; and wishes, that no such Obligation had never been imposed upon him.

But, here it will be said; That the Resolution of this Case does not come home to our present Dissenters: For, they judge the Commands of Authority about

those things which we call Indifferent, to be not only inconvenient, but sinful; and for that reason, they deny Conformity in Practice. But, this hath been in part Answered before; and shall receive a farther consideration in the two following *Queries*.

*Qu. 16. Whether to punish any for not Conforming to such Modes and Forms of Worship, as in their Consciences they judg sinful, be not to punish them for not doing what is acknowledged to be their Duty not to do?*

*Ans.* 'Tis all Men's Duty to obey lawful Authority, either Actively, or Passively: Active Obedience is not required, where Authority commands things to be done that are sinful and unlawful: Therein we ought to obey God, rather than Man. But, if the matter of the Law be about things indifferent, no suffering of the Penalty annexed to that Law, can compensate our Violation of it: For, the end of all Laws, is Obedience. And a Loyal Subject, and humble Christian, will rather mistrust his own Judgment, than his Governour's; and not upon needless Scruples and Surmises, and an implicit Dependence

pendence upon the Judgment of private Men disobey both God and Man. But to make some nearer Approaches to the *Query*: 'Tis not Conscience (if that thing be condemned as sinful) which is not some way or other forbid by God in the sacred Scriptures. Indeed, nothing is more usual with Men, than to palliate over their Schisms and Disobedience, to wholsom and good Laws, with the Pretences of Conscience: But 'tis no such thing, unless they have plain and expreis Scripture to Authorize the Violation of the Laws of their Governours. It may be (as a very Reverend Person observes)

1. Humour; *i. e.* Men may think themselves bound to do those things, which they have Inclination to do; and they may think themselves bound to omit many things, which they have a strong Aversion against.
2. Fancy; which too often usurps the Seat of Reason; and leads and guides Men more in their Wayes, than either Scripture or Conscience.
- Or, 3. Passion; which is as strong as Fancy; and hurries Men very often to do such wild and extravagant Actions, as are the very Shames and Contumelies of Human Nature.

And yet too many,

Dr. Hammond.

when they have been engaged in such things, conceive it dishonourable to Repent and Retract; and so employ their Reasons, to justify such Errors and Excesses. Or, 4. Diabolical Suggestion; There is too apparent Probability, that Men are acted and led by the Instigations of the wicked-Spirit, when Religion and Conscience are produced to justify Faction or Schism, or any other Practises that are either condemned in Scripture, or tend to weaken the Interests of Christianity. Or, 5. Forestalments and Prejudices, inhibited by ill Education and Instruction: The main business of some Men is, to instill such Principles into the Minds of those whom they pretend to Teach, as shall possess them with mean and unworthy Thoughts of the Church, and its Publick Constitutions. And many have no other Religion to boast of, but that they disown that way of it, which is used and professed in the Church of *England*. Heretofore, indeed, the *Common-Prayer* was Embraced by many Persons, that gave themselves too much Liberty in sensual Living: But, there are not a few now, who bid Defiance to It, that lead neither *Godly, Righteous, nor Sober Lives.*

*Lives.* And the main Reason is, that they are possessed with early Prejudices against it; and are like those, described by St. Peter, who *speak Evil*, and Re-<sup>2 Pet. 2.</sup> proachfully, *of the things they understand not.*<sup>12.</sup>

And, this Prejudice is improved by Pride, Obstinacy, and Self - Love; which Mental Vices, make Men believe, That those Opinions which they first take up with in Religion, or which are Recommended to them by those who have got a Name among the Multitude, are undoubted Truths. And so, Men chuse their Religion, just as they do *Valentines*; they take that which they first meet with; and so, their Religion is matter of Chance and Lottery, not of any rational or manly Choice

If then, that which Men call Conscience, be either Humour, or Fancy, or Passion, or Diabolical Suggestion, or Prejudice; certainly, Authority may endeavour to Eject such stubborn Spirits, by Penalties proportionable to their Strength. No Man can plead Conscience for not Conforming to the establish'd Worship of the Church of *England*, unless he can produce Scripture; which either forbids his Conformity, or condemns any thing  
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in that Worship as sinful, which is enjoyn'd him by Authority. All that can be said in this Case, is, That he doubts, whether he ought to Worship God after such a manner or no: But, to this it may be Answered; 1. That there are many able Ministers in the Church, to whom he may repair for Satisfaction in his Scruples and Doubts. And, 2dly. The fore-mentioned excellent Person sayes, *That although Doubting, simply taken (i. e. where no Command interposes) may keep me from doing what I doubt; yet it ought not to be of that weight, as to keep me from my lawful Superiour's lawful Command; because, that very Command is a sufficient Ground to supersede my Doubting, when I have no plain Prohibition of Scripture to the Contrary: It being my Duty, and part of my Christian Meekness, in doubtful matters, to take my Resolution from those whom God hath placed over me; and it being the Sin of Dogmatizing (or, Setting up new Opinions) to affirm any thing unlawful for me or others to do, which some Law of God still in force doth not prohibit: Which Sin, being added to that other of Disobedience to my Lawful Superiours, will sure never be able to make that commence Vertue,*  
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*which was before so far from any Pretensions to that Title.*

**Qu. 17.** *Whether it be not the Duty of all Christians to walk together so far as they have attained, and in other things to wait the Revelation of the Mind of God, to them that differ?*

**Ans.** There is no doubt, but that every Christian is bound to frame and order the Course of his Life, according to the Measures of his Knowledge: But then, his small Attainments in Religion, and Weakness of Understanding, in apprehending Truth, should not make him either willful in retaining Errour, or Opiniative in despising those that have more Knowledge than himself. Weak Christians have the least Reason in the World, to question the Sanction of Laws, or the Wisdom of their Governours: For, conforming to those two, are the best Security, that such Persons can have against the Evil of Sin or Punishment. Babes in Knowledge, are not fit to be entrusted with their own Conduct and Protection, any more than those in Years: And Children, that are Cockeyed and upheld  
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in their Humours, do first bring their Parents, and then themselves, to a late, and very often to a fruitless Repentance. But this might be prevented, if Parents would take a true Prospect of their Duty, and impose upon their Children, Laws to secure them from Danger, and guide them in upright and safe Paths; as well as provide them Cloaths to hide their Shame, and Food to allay their Hunger.

If Men would live up to the plain Principles of their Religion; or (as the *Query* expresses it) *would walk together so far as they have attained*; they could not possibly conceive it their Duty, totally to forsake their Parochial-Churches; and think it an arbitrary indifferent Matter, whether they professed themselves Christians, or Infidels. And yet, to this strange Madness have too many arrived, in these late Years of Indulgence. And those that have seated themselves in the *Scorner's* and *Infidel's Chair*, will have more Followers, if all the Laws of the Church and State (which concern Religion) must be unravelled and cancelled; and no one punish'd either for the neglect or contempt of Christianity. It was never known,  
but

but a truly humble, and meek Christian, would suspect his own Judgment, if it thwarted his Superiour's: And, if he had doubtful and different Apprehensions, concerning things that were Disputable, and Intricate; yet he would never condemn a whole National-Church, and withdraw from its Communion; unless there were very great Corruptions, and Defects in it; and these too so plain and evident from Scripture, as might justify both his Charge and Separation. There was an Age (wherein there was less talk of Religion, and yet a more universal Obedience given to its Laws) that Christians did Communicate with one another, in the Offices of Religion; though they were tainted with more Corruptions and Superstitions, than I think any sober *Dissenter* will charge upon the Church of *England*. And yet, notwithstanding this, they did not apprehend themselves to Communicate with those Assemblies in their Errours or Superstitions. Thus the Orthodox Christians and *Arians*, the Orthodox Christians and *Novations*, met together, and had Fellowship with each other in the Publick Assemblies, and Offices of Religion; and yet, the first were

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Hereticks, and the other Schismatics. And, to put this Case out of all doubt; In the Dayes of our Blessed Saviour, there was never any Church (unless it be that of *Rome* at this Day) that was pestered and defaced with more and greater Heresies, Corruptions, and Impieties, than that of the *Jews*. And these, like a contagious Leprosie, over-spread as well the Chief Governours, as subordinate Members that belonged to it. 'Tis not necessary to enumerate them; any one may be satisfied about them, that will but peruse the Four *Evangelists*. That which I would commend to the Reader's Observation, is, That notwithstanding that sad Face of things, which were in the Dayes of our Saviour, in the *Jewish-Church*; and, although Christ came to Erect a Church and Worship more pure and refined, and quite to Abolish that of the *Jews*; yet He, and His Apostles, constantly frequented the Publick-Assemblies, both in the Temple, and the Synagogues; and never, either by Precept or Example, gave the least Encouragement unto any Persons, to separate or with-draw themselves, from the Worship that was then used; but still encouraged them

them, to pay all due Reverence and Obedience to Publick-Laws, and Governours. And certainly, Conformity to the Example of our great Lord and Master, would be a more Infallible Signe of an humble Mind, and a tender Conscience, than to trample upon all Laws and Governments; and listen to the Suggestions of a tempting Spirit, who often *transforms himself into an Angel of Light*, and makes Men believe, That his Diabolical Impressions and Infusions, proceed from no other Fountain, than the Spirit of Holiness and Truth.

To the later Part of the *Query*, I shall only say, That God has made sufficient Discoveries of his Blessed Will to us in his Holy Word; and to wait for any farther Revelations of it, is *Enthusiasm*, and not Christianity. In Doubts, relating to Religion, Men would do better to resign up themselves to the Fathers of the Church, and seek Satisfaction from the *Priest's Lips*; than attend to the Dictates of their own dark Minds; or the Whispers and Directions of those Persons, who by their irregular Zeal, and unwarrantable Practises, widen the Breaches in this  
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Kingdom, and weaken the Interest of the Protestant Religion.

Qu. 18. *Whether in those Duties, whereon Eternity depends, it be not the highest Absurdity, to force any against their own Light, to be guided by others, who are not Infallible?*

Ans. I might dismiss this *Query*, by telling the Proposer of it, that it has been before Answered: For, 'tis only old Matter, cloath'd in the Attire of new Words. But, I shall farther consider it, by saying, That 'tis no higher Absurdity in these Dayes of the Gospel, for Men (in matters of Religion) to be guided by a Learned and Pious Minister; and much more, by all the Governours of a National-Church, than it was under the *Mosaick Oeconomy*, to seek the Law at the Priest's Mouth, who was the Messenger of the Lord of Hosts, Mal. 2. 7. None of the Prophets of the Old, nor Apostles of the New-Testament, had constantly abiding with them the Holy Spirit of God, immediately upon every Accident and Emergency, to Inspire them with his infallible Dictates. But, does it follow from hence, that

that those who were under their Charge and Government, should dispute their Mission, rejected their Doctrines and Instructions, and make *Queries* concerning their Authority and Commands? If this Argument would hold Water, not only the whole Ministry of the Christian Church, but all Offices and Dignities in the Common-Wealth, would become void and useless. As for the Ministry; although no sober Clergy-man will say, that he is infallibly guided in Praying, Preaching, or any other Office of Religion; yet what absurdity is it for Men to be guided by those Clergy-Men, that do not pretend to that Priviledge? That God, who would have the *Spirit of the Prophets subject to the Prophets*, 1 Cor. 14. 32. would also have People submissive and obedient to their Rulers, or Bishops, Heb. 13. 17. who have in all Ages exercised an Authoritative Judgment, without any pretence to Infallibility, in the Concerns of Religion; till that Priviledge was challenged by the Chair or Conclave at *Rome*. And this, they have derived from him, who is the only Fountain of Power, of Laws, and Rectitude.

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And the Argument of Infallibility holds as much against any Judge or Magistrate, in the civil Concerns of Human Life, as against the Ministry of the Church: For, although no Client or Criminal be obliged to believe his Judge Infallible; yet every one that bears that honourable Office, ought to be firmly perswaded of the Truth and Rectitude of his own Sentence, and Proceedings; and those that are concerned as Parties in his Actings, ought as absolutely to acquiesce in what he determines, as if he had deriv'd all his Instructions from an Infallible Oracle. A Man may Act Infallibly in his Station, though he be not himself Infallible; for, he does so, who Acts and Proceeds by an infallible, unerring Rule. Alas! There is no one but knows, how boldly Atheism is Own'd and Professed amongst us. Now, suppose an Atheist should be proceeded against by the Authority of the Church or State; by this Argument, How is it possible, that such a Monster shou'd be punish'd or convicted? How justly would he plead, that all Proceedings against him were illegal and unwarrantable; and that, upon this very ground, Because no one could infallibly  
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know Him to be a Person of such wretched and unnatural Principles?

'Tis true, all Doctrines ought to be tryed and examined by their proper Measures and Standards. And, there is nothing more blame-worthy in Men, that have Time and Abilities, than to be such *Beasts of Burthen*, as to undergo whatever is imposed upon them; and by an implicit lazy Belief, to rely absolutely upon the Sentiments and Determinations of other Persons, without any studious Search and Enquiry into the Nature of Things themselves. But, I hope, there is some *mean* between this; and for Men to be allowed a Liberty to deal with their Religion, and the Truths of God, just as they do with the Cloaths that they wear upon their Bodies; which they put on and off, and change as their Fancy prompts them, or as the Weather and Fashion alters: For a Man only to be *guided by his own Light*, and to believe the Gospel with a Reserve, with doubting, and fluctuation of Mind; and to be alwayes in a readiness to Change the Communion of his Church, and his Religion, with the next Moon, so soon as ever a new Light appears; is so far from being rooted and

established, from being stedfast and immoveable in the Truth of Christ; that 'tis to be giddily, and sortishly Religious; and to be *tossed too and fro, and carried about with every Wind of Doctrine*, contrary to what we are commanded, *Eph. 4. 14.* And yet, How innumerable are the Instances of this Age? who, so soon as they separate from their Mother-Church, know not where to abide and fix, whether in the *Desart*, or *Secret Chambers*; but proceed from bad to worse, from Solifidianism to Infidelity, from Scepticism to Atheism, from questioning the Laws of their Superiours, to the arraignment of the Laws of the Laws of God. And, because in the last Stage of their Lives, they would have the Reputation of some Religion, they commonly take Sanctuary in Popery or Enthusiasm: And so; they live doubting; and, if Conscience be not quite seared and stupify'd, they dye despairing.

Qu. 19. *Whether, at the great Day of Account, it will excuse false Worshippers to say, They therein followed the Guidance of those, who pretended to have Authority to Conduct, and Govern them in the Duties*

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*of Religion? and whether, if the Blind lead the Blind, they will not both fall into the Ditch?*

*Ans.* By *False-Worshippers*, are meant either those who serve God according to the *Liturgy* of the Church of *England*, or some other Assembly of Christians: If the later, the *Query* is impertinent; If the former, the Gentleman that proposes it, is extremely uncharitable; and obtrudes that upon the unwary Countrymen (for whom the *Queries* were chiefly design'd) which is as false and slanderous, as any thing that ever yet came from the Father of Lyes. 'Tis Men's drawing nigh to God with their Lips, and putting Him far away from their Hearts, that denominates them to be False-Worshippers: And no one knows who does this, but He whose Prerogative it is, to *search the Hearts, and try the Reins*. That Worship is absolutely void of all Falsity, which is neither Idolatrous, nor Superstitious: There may be indeed other things, which may vitiate the Services of those *Worshippers*, that pretend to make their Religious Addresses to the Divine Majesty. But nothing, but one of those

two Evils, can make the Worship it self false and unlawful. And to charge this upon the Church of *England*, argues the Person that does it, either to be so strangely Ignorant, or immeasurably Malitious; that he is fitter to receive a Confutation from the Penalties of Laws, and the Sentence of a Judge, than from strength of Reason or Argument. I will boldly averr; That there is no Congregated *Independent* Communion in *England*, but the respective Pastor of it, assumes to himself more Power and Authority to Govern and Conduct the sworn Members of it, in the Wayes and Duties of Religion, than the greatest Prelate in our Church does in his Province or Diocess. I shall not go about to prove this, from what the Faction of *Independency* did in the Dayes of *Oliv. Cromwel*, when it was at its *Zenith*; and was the only Sect, that was Protected and Carefed by him. The thing is apparent, from the very Principles of *Independency*; which aim at little else but Tyranny, and *Præ-eminence*. *Poperie* it self, does not invest Priests with a more absolute Power over Mens Consciences, than *Independency*. There is no Instance of Tyranny in the *Roman-Church*, which scarce exceeds

ceeds that, of having Power to damn any Soul or Assembly of Christians, by making the Virtue of the Sacraments to depend upon the Intention of the Priest. And, What less Power is there in the *Independent* Pastors, when they exclude whom they please from the means of Salvation; and make that a Condition of their Communion which is impossible, viz. for Men to tell the punctual Time of their Conversion, and when they constrain all the Members of their Churches to depend upon their grave Nods, and ill Humours? And, to instance in one more Particular; That which gives the *Popish*-Clergy such Dominion over the Laity, is, the Doctrine and Practise of *Auricular Confession*. And, What less Priviledge have the *Independent*-Teachers, when they pry into the very Secrets of Men's Souls, Lives, and Actions, by severe Scrutinies and Examinations; and will admit none to their Covenant, or to be Members of their gathered Churches, till they have satisfy'd the Curiosity of their Guid. It is more than probable, That this (and not meaness of Trade) impoverishes City and Country: For, (to say nothing of those vast sums of Money,

that are raised, and disburs'd, to maintain and uphold seditious Meetings) if a Congregational, or Dissenting-Preacher hath such a Key hanging at his Girdle; which has so many Wards in it, as that, with the help of it, he can open and shut the Consciences of his Profelytes; he will be presently able, at his own Pleasure, to unlock their Counters, and Cash-Boxes: And then, 'tis an easie matter to rule without Controule, and command without Contradiction.

As for the later Part of the *Query*, about *Blind Leaders* and *Followers*; I could wish this Gentleman would not make such flye and unworthy Reflections, upon the Conformable Laiety and Clergy of this Kingdom: Surely, both of them may equalize the *Dissenters* in Knowledge; and, perhaps, in Piety of Life, and Sobriety of Manners. And, if any of the conformable Clergy, are not so Learned, and knowing, as they ought; yet 'tis more Eligible to follow an ignorant and an honest, than a knowing and knavish Guide.

Qu. 20. *Whether it be not most unreasonable in the Concerns of Eternity, to tye*  
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*Men by Temporal Penalties, to fallible Guides; whom to follow, may be their Eternal; to forsake, their Temporal Ruine?*

*Ans.* This *Query* is much - what the same with the Eighteenth; to which, with other preceding Answers, I refer the Reader for Satisfaction.

*Qu. 21. Whether the main In-let of all Distractions, Persecutions, and Divisions, in the World, hath not been by adding and requiring other Conditions of Church-Fellowship and Communion, than Christ, or his Apostles?*

*Ans.* No: For, let this Gentleman consider the ten Persecutions that were raised against the Primitive Christians, and he will not find in any of the Records of those Ages, that any of them were caused by adding and requiring other Conditions of Church-Fellowship, than what was enjoined by Christ, and his Apostles. Italy was a part of the Christian World, when the *Goths* and *Vandals* made their Inrodes into it; and yet, all those Miseries, Distractions, and Desolations, which the poor Christians of that Age underwent,

went, from those barbarous Nations, did not proceed from the Original, asserted by this Gentleman. Indeed, the Schisms and Factions, and deplorable Impieties that were among the Christians at that time (mentioned by that devout Writer, and Bishop, *Salvian*) might so far exasperate God's Patience, as to make those fore-mentioned Heathens the Executioners of his *Justice*. But, *Church-Communion and Fellowship* neither was, nor could in the least be pretended by that bloody People. If any Credit may be given to *Salvian*, the Lives of us Christians in this Church and Kingdom, do as nearly parallel the Wickedness of the *Italian* Christians, when God scourg'd them with those Rods of his Anger; as any thing that can be observed or found in History. And, we have little Reason to hope, but that we may tast of the like Cup of Fury, as they Did: For, certainly, the Sins of this Nation are not so inconsiderable; nor hath it of late Years, been unacquainted with so few Changes and Vicissitudes; nor, lastly, is the Prospect of things so fair and hopeful among us, but that God may raise up Enemies, that shall Triumph and Sport them.



themselves in our Ruine; and make us learn by the most dreadful accents of his Anger, how *evil a thing, and a bitter*, it is to forsake the Communion of a National-Church; and what Miseries our own licentious Liberty, and Indulgence, will bring upon us.

But, perhaps, this Gentleman would have all the *Distractions, Persecutions, and Divisions*, that have been among Christians, to be occasioned from *requiring other Conditions of Church-Fellowship*, than what was required by Christ, and his Apostles. But there are very great Mistakes in the *Query*, if it be understood in this Sense: For, when there were such severe Proceedings of Christian Emperours against Hereticks; and, when some of the Emperours joyn'd with the Hereticks, against the Orthodox Christians; neither the one way or other, was upon the account of any Innovations brought into the Church, as *Conditions of Christian-Communion*; but meerly, for the Truths of Christ; and those Truths too such, as concerned the very Vitals and Fundamentals of Christianity. Most of those Punishments that were *vice versa*, inflicted upon Hereticks, and Orthodox Christians,

Christians, by *Constantine, Constantius, &c.* were either upon the one for Denying, or upon the other for Professing and Defending some of the principle Articles of the Christian Religion. I profess my self Ignorant of any *Distractions, Persecutions, or Divisions*, that were ever rais'd in the Christian World, upon the account of *adding or requiring* new or unheard-of Conditions of *Church-Fellowship*; unless it were in the Difference between the *Western and Eastern-Churches*, about the observation of *Easter*, which caus'd a great Hurry and Combustion; and which is sufficiently condemned by all sober Writers of this Church, as well as the Learned *Dissenters* from it.

But this Instance can by no means be applyed to the present Case of the Church of *England*, and those that separate from its Communion: For, 1. It may be presum'd, that every National-Church hath a more Indisputable Power over its own Members, than either the *Western-Church* had over the *Eastern*, or the *Eastern* over the *Western*. And, 2dly. There is a wide Difference between the conditions of Communion required in the Church of *England*, and those that were  
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between the *Western* and *Eastern*-Churches, about the Celebration of *Easter*: For, that was a trivial inconsiderable Business, which no way advanced the Interest of Piety; and from which the Sticklers, and Heads of both Parties, might have receded, without the least Injury done to Religion, or Reflection and Diminution of their own Authorities. Both the contending Parties were equal. And, *Par in parem non habet potestatem*. Indeed, if the Members of the *Eastern*-Church had forsaken their Bishops, and observed the *Easter-Festival*, as the *Western*-Church did; they had been guilty of Disobedience to their Guides, and their Separation had been Criminous. For, every Church hath a Power to guide and govern its own Members, in all Indifferent Actions pertaining to its own Communion. And therefore, the Church of *England* meddles with no other Persons or Communions, but those that live within its own Pale: And, as for them, it tenders no other conditions of Church-Fellowship, than a very few Rites; which, Her Governours conceive, may conduce to the orderly and decent Performance of Divine-Worship, and to advance the  
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Devotion and Edification of Christian People. Name any one thing, besides Reverence at the Name of Jesus, Kneeling at the Communion, Standing at the Recital of the Creed, and the Ring in Marriage; wherein the Laity have any Condition imposed on them, in order to their partaking of the Benefits of the Publick Worship. The first Ceremony or Rite, is left arbitrary in most Places; And the Third, every one observes of his own accord: And the last is only required of those Persons, that enter into the Conjugal State: For, although the Ring in Marriage be as much a Ceremony, as any enjoined by our Church; yet the most violent *Dissenter* does not in the least scruple it, if he can get Gold and Silver enough with a Wife, to advance his Fortune, or erect his Family. Kneeling at the Holy *Eucharist* is that, to which the strictest Obedience is required: And, Why should not a Christian, in Receiving the Symbols of his Saviour's Body and Blood, bow the Knee to Him in Reverence and Devotion; as well as the *Jews* did, when they were about to Crucifie Him, in Scorn and Derision? Or, What sin or hurt can it be, for any Christian

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to renew his Covenant with his Redeemer, and request from all the promised Blessings and Mercies of it, in a praying and devout Posture?

With what Confidence then, can any one charge the Church of *England*, with all the *Distractions* and *Divisions*, that now abound in this sinful Nation? These, and many more Miseries and Evils, that are likely to fall upon us; She would prevent by the tenderness of her Care, and the wisdom of Her Counsels, if Men's *Hearts were not fully set in them to do Evil*, and they were resolved to *do Evil with both Hands earnestly*. I have before prov'd, and must now again repeat it, That never any National-Church in the World, but assumed a Power to determine the Bounds of its own Communion; and that by such particular Rites and Constitutions, as should preserve Order, promote Peace, and advance the Edification of its several Members. And, if there were any Blemishes or Defects in the Constitutions of our Church, a good Man would cover and conceal them from common Notice and Observation: For, perhaps, it may be found at the great Day of Reckoning, as great a Wickedness

ness for Men to expose the Nakedness of their Spiritual Mother, the Church; as it was in that accursed Person, to look on the Shame of his Natural Father. But, causelessly and falsely to accuse a whole Church and Kingdom, as the Fountain of all the *Distractions and Divisions* that abound in it; is to exceed his Bounds, who is called in Holy Scripture, The *Accuser of the Brethren*: For, I cannot find, that his Malice ever extended any further, than the Impeachment of particular Persons. If indeed, the Church of *England* did tread in the same Paths with that of *Rome*; viz. to require, as Conditions of Her Communion, Men's Assents and Subscriptions to Articles of Religion, that were *de fide*, Erroneous; and their Conformity and Attendance upon a Worship, that was *de facto*, Impious: If Her Doctrine were Heretical, or Her Worship Idolatrous or Superstitious; and that She Persecuted those to Death, that would not assent to the one, and comply with her in the other; there were some reason to withdraw from Her Communion, and charge Her with Cruelty and *Persecution*: But, She is far from being Guilty of any such Tyranny or Dominion

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over the Faith or Consciences of Christians. And, what-ever Severities are used towards Dissenters, *Persecution* can be no more justly imputed to Her, than *Hagar* could charge it upon *Sarah*, when she thrust her and the Bond-Son out of the Family of her Husband.

But, to conclude the Answer to this Query: *St. James* acquaints us with another Cause of Wars and *Persecutions*, than the Impositions of a few Rites and Ceremonies in Matters of Religion: He says, That they proceed from Men's *Lusts, which war in their Members*: Those *Jan 4.1.* raise a Discomposure and Tempest in Men's Souls; They Rebel first against the Law of their Minds; and then, they engage Men to Rebel against the Laws of their Superiours. And, the Wiseman tells us what one of those *Lusts* is; when he says, *Only by Pride comes Contention.* *Prov. 13.* And that Mental Vice expresses it self in nothing more, than when Subjects find fault with the Laws of their Governours; and attempt to remove old Land-Marks, innocent and useful Constitutions, and to Erect others of their own Models and Inventions. Neither can I forbear mentioning one Passage more

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of that wise Writer; when he sayes,  
*Prov. 10.* That *Hatred stirreth up Strife, but Love*  
*12.* *covers all Sin.* Men are prejudic'd against the Government and Constitutions of the Church; and they use all possible Endeavours, to make others so too. And, many can give no more reason for their Aversion against such things, than he did; when he said,

*Non amo te sabidi, nec possum dicere, &c.*

*I love thee not, nor know I reason why;  
 This I will say, I'll hate thee till I dye.*

*Qu. 22.* Whether Jesus Christ, who came to take away the Yoke and Burthen of the Jewish Ceremonies, appointed by God Himself, hath given Power and Authority unto any, to Institute in their room such others, as they shall think good?

*Ans.* I shall crave leave of the Reader, to speak largely unto this Query; because the Matter contained in it, is one of the main things, that Dissenters insist on, in their Separation from the Church of England. These Words of Mr. Hooker, would be a sufficient Answer to it;

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Although God never ordained any thing Ecc. Pol  
 that could be bettered; yet many things I. 3. S 10  
 he hath, that have been changed, and that  
 for the better. To these excellent Words,  
 I could add the Confession of seven  
 Churches beyond-Sea, as they are cited  
 in the *Harmonia Evangelica*: For, they  
 all unanimously declare, That Ceremonies  
 of Human Institution, are lawful in the  
 Worship of God: And, if lawful, certainly  
 Christ gave a Power to some Persons,  
 to Institute in room of the Jewish Cere-  
 monies, such others as they should think  
 good. But, before I proceed any further,  
 I cannot chuse but commend to the Rea-  
 der, the Words of a very ingenuous  
 Gentleman, in a Book called, *Moral Dis-*  
*courses and Essayes upon several select Sub-*  
*jects.* Long lay the Primitive Christians Essay of  
 (sayes he) under the grievous Yoke of Church-  
 Heathenish Tyranny, enjoying neither Tole- Disci-  
 ration nor Connivence: They had no pline.  
 Laws, but of their own Admission; no Go-  
 vernours, but of their own Permission:  
 They lived rather by Examples, than by  
 Laws: It was then but necessary, there  
 should be Extraordinary, to supply the De-  
 fect of Ordinary Powers. Now, that Chri-  
 stians are our Magistrates, it may justly be

*expected, that what was planted by Miracles; should be cherished by Laws: But, no persecuted Church can be in so deplorable a Condition, as that which wants Apostles, and rejects Pastors. The Church is not so limited to Forms and Methods, but that She hath still a Latitude left Her, to Act according to emergent Necessities; and frame to Her Self such Constitutions, as Self-preservation requires, and the Example of all Societies will justify: I cannot see why civil Property should be secured and empaled with the best Laws, that Wisdom and Experience can devise; and yet, Christ's Vineyard should be left without a Hedge, the Army of Martyrs like disbanded Troops, and Christians like a Multitude of People, that have entered into no Society: So far that excellent Person.*

And indeed, nothing is more evident in the New-Testament, than that Christ did entrust those whom He appointed in His Absence to be the Ministers of His Church, with the Government of it: But, this Government could not subsist without the enacting of Laws for its own, and the Churches Preservation. For, that Christ intended, when He laid the Foundation of the Church in the Apostles,  
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and purchased it with His own Blood. Indeed, if the Society of the Church had been a compleated Body, and perfected whilst Christ lived upon the Earth; there is no doubt, but he would have left a compleat *Pandect*, or Volum of Laws, for its Rule and Government, till he came again to Judgment. But Christ only laid the Foundation of that Society, which we call a Church: The Apostles were to be the Master-builders of it; and their Lives ending, their Authority was to come unto others, that succeeded them in the Ministry of the Church. And the Successours, in the enacting of Laws, were to have an Eye to the Pattern; *viz.* unto those Rules, by which the Apostles did Govern the Church in a visible Unity: For, 'tis a great Mistake to think, that the Apostle's Authority did only consist in the Power of the Keyes, and giving Laws to that present Age of Christians: No; It consisted also, in having Power to deligate, and make over their Authority and Rights, unto those that should succeed them in the Churches Government. And, this was necessary; that so a visible Church might be preserved and continued upon Earth, till the

Second Coming of Christ to Judge the World. But, there could have been no such Visible Society, if there had been no Law for its Unity: For, the Church's Unity was the main thing that Christ took care of before His Crucifixion; as appears from those passionate Words of His, *Joh. 17. 11. Holy Father, keep through Thy own Name, those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are.* And, lest any should think that He pray'd only for His Disciples, and not for the succeeding Ages of Christians; He tells us in the twentyeth, and following Verses; *Neither Pray I for these alone; but for them also, that shall believe on Me, through their Word: That they all may be one, as Thou Father art in Me, and I in Thee: That they also, may be one in Us: That the World may believe, that Thou hast sent Me. And, the Glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are One: I in them, and Thou in Me; that they may be made Perfect in one; and that the World may know, that Thou hast sent Me.* In which Words he intimates, that Schisms and Divisions among Christians, would bring the whole Doctrine of the Gospel into question,

question; and, at last, make it dis-believ-  
ed and rejected. But, that which I would  
principally have the Reader observe in  
them, is, The Care that our Blessed Lord  
and Master took for that great Essential  
of Christianity, *The Unity of the Church*.  
For, what-ever Men discourse concerning  
that Internal Union, and Love, which  
ought to be among all Christians; though  
they differ in some lesser Points and Cir-  
cumstantials of Religion: This is true, if  
they own that which is the main Principle  
of all Christian Amity and Affection, viz,  
the *Visible Unity* of Christian Communion,  
in the External Administration of God's  
sacred Worship. This must be; because  
the Christian Church upon Earth, is a  
visible Society of Men, professing the  
Faith of Christ. And, that which is to  
be the Bond and *Nexe* of this visible Bo-  
dy, is to be obvious to Men's Senses, as  
well as intelligible to their Reasons: For,  
those Graces of Love, Faith, &c. which  
are invisible, unite Christians to their  
Mystical-Head, and strengthen their vi-  
sible Communion among one another, in  
the outward Offices of Religion. If in-  
deed, Men were all Spirit, and no Flesh;  
and could dive, and enter into one ano-

ther's Hearts and Thoughts, without the aid of external Reasoning and Discourse; there were some Plea for the exercise of invisible Graces, without the Help and Ministry of the outward Offices of Christianity. But our Saviour, in those fore-mentioned Words, ordered the Religion of Christians, according to the State and Condition of Human Nature; and therefore, seems to make the very Being of their Religion, to depend upon the Unity of the Church: For, He knew it impossible for the Gospel to be propagated and upheld by Faith and Charity, only as they were lodg'd in Men's Hearts; unless the Fruits of such Graces were exerted in some things, that were visible and obvious to Sense. And what was so, ought to be uniform and undivided: For, variety of Rites in one National-Church, would cause division of Judgment, and of Affection. And, many Assemblies of Christians, living under the same Civil Government, when they were canton'd into Parties, and independent one of another; would have weakened, and at last destroy'd Christianity. For, from such small Beginnings, and independent Communions, there would have been

been no more possibility to have spread and propagated it in the World; than an Army, divided and scattered into Parties, could be able to encounter with another that was united, and observed all the Orders of the chief Commander.

Having thus explained one of the main Vitals of Christianity, *viz.* The *Unity of the Church*; the Reader is farther to consider, That in the Dayes of Christ's abiding upon Earth, there could not possibly be any Law made for the Preservation of this Unity. And, the Reason is, Because the Church was not to be confined (like that of the *Jews*) to one Nation; but was to be dispers'd throughout the Face of the whole Earth: So that, no Religious Rites could be made Laws for the *Churche's Unity*; because those Rites which were agreeable to one sort of People, would not be so unto others. And therefore, our great Lord and Master, though He took care to commit Matters of Faith unto Writing, and to make them like Himself, *Subject to no Variableness, nor shadow of Turning*; yet there was no such Reason for Ceremonies: For, the Institution of those things, He committed to the Apostles, and

and their Successours; who were to Preach His Gospel, Erect His Church, and enlarge His Kingdom: And, for the accomplishing of those great Ends, might use their own Prudence to appoint such Rituals in Religion, as were most agreeable to the Manners and Customs of those Nations that should be converted to Christianity; and that should tend to promote true Piety and Goodness in their Hearts and Lives. When Christ made void the Law of Ceremonies in the *Jewish*-Church, (or rather indeed, when the Ceremonies expired of themselves) He intended to inspire the Minds of His Apostles, and their Successours, with so much soundness and integrity of Wisdom and Understanding; that they should be able by their own Reasons, to enact such Laws and Orders, as should preserve the External Unity of the Church; and render Religion so amiable, as that it should not be quite Naked, and destitute of all External Ornament and Beauty. Neither is it in the least, repugnant to the Infinite Wisdom of Christ towards His Church, to invest the Governours of it, with Authority to Institute New Ceremonies in His Worship; unless He Himself, or His Apostles,



Apostles, had declared, when the *Jewish* Rites were abolished, That no other should be observed in their room and stead. And the Reverend Bishop *Sanderson*, in some of his Lectures *de Oblig. Consc.* saith, *That there is as much Reason from the Abolition of the Mosacik-Law, for Men to dispute against the enacting of Civil Laws, for the Government of Empire and States; as against Positive Laws, that are made for the External Regiment of the Church: For, God Himself was as much the Author of the Forensick Laws, which concern'd the Government of the Jewish-State; as He was of the Ceremonial-Law, which related to their Church.* So that, if this Argument be good, That no Ceremonies ought to be introduced into the Church, because Christ abrogated those which were appointed by God Himself; it will follow, That no Laws ought to be made in the State, upon the same reason and account. But surely, the well-being and ordering of that Religious Society, The-Church, is as dear unto God, and tends as much to preserve his Rights of Dominion over his Creatures, as the well-being of the State. And, it seems strangely to reflect upon God's Wisdom  
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and Goodness, to give unto civil Powers such a large Commission, to make what Laws they please, for securing the Peace and civil Rights of their People; and none unto the Guides of His Church, to make Laws for the Preservation of Religion, against the Deluges of Heresies and Schisms; and to secure Christians in the Paths of Piety and Order, of Unity and Peace.

The *Jews* were a People of gross Understandings, and indocible Minds, as many of their Prophets intimate: And, therefore it was, that God did mistrust their Prudence, and assist their Weakness; and gave them Rules for their Behaviour, in the civil Concerns of their Lives, and the smallest Instances of His Worship. But, the Appearing of Christ, hath not only *abolished Death*; but the Darkness and Blindness of Men's Minds: *Life and Immortality is brought to Light through the Gospel*. God's Image is in a great measure repair'd and restor'd in the Soul of Man; and he is indued with the *Spirit of Power* and Wisdom, of Knowledg, and a *sound Mind*; and, by these he is enabled to make Laws so excellent in themselves, and so conducive to the Com-

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mon Benefit, that all things shall conspire to the Glory of God, and the mutual Good of Christians. He that would be assured of the Truth of this, let him look back to the first Ages of the Church; and he will find all the Offices and Institutions of the Christian Religion, adorned with such a comely Simplicity, modest Magnificence, and awful Reverence; He will find the Prayers of Christians so solemn, their Sacraments so frequent, and all the Ordinances of the Gospel, so edifying, and full of Comfort; that its greatest Enemies were forced from the inward Conviction of their Minds, either to admire its Glory, or submit unto its Power. And let any sober *Dissenter*, instance in any one Ceremony, now used in the *English*-Church, that is destitute of the fore-mentioned Properties, and tends not to create the like awful Apprehensions in the Minds of Christians, as those Rites which were used in the first Centuries of Christianity.

And, it may be argued also, *a fortiori*; that if it were in the Power of the Primitive Guides of the Church, to injoyne Christians the abrogated Ceremonies of the *Jewish*-Law, for the Propagation

tion of the Christian Faith; much more must it be in the Power of their Successors, to Institute others; and so many in their stead, as may conduce to so high and generous an End. And yet, nothing is more evident, than that the abolished Ceremonies of *Moses* were in the very first dawning of the Gospel, (when there was great danger of returning to *Judaism*, Christianity having scarce taken root) observed by Christians; and that, by the express Warrant and Command of the Apostles. This is evident, in their abstaining from Blood, and from Things strangled, and offered to Idols; from their Observation of *Easter*, which had an exact Correspondence of Time with the *Jewish-Passover*; from their using of *Circumcision*, which bloody and painful Rite, many of the Primitive Bishops underwent, in the very Age of the Apostles: Fifteen did so together, in the *See* of *Jerusalem*, till the Reign of *Adrian* the Emperour.

Indeed, it *sounds well* for Men confidently to affirm, That nothing is to be used in the Divine Worship, but what is warranted by Divine Command. But, To what purpose is that, or the like Passage,

sage, so often inculcated in Sermons, and Printed Books? Who was there that ever appeared in the Defence of the Ceremonies, or the Authority that enjoyns them, but did over and again declare, That God's Will was to be the Rule of his Worship; and that it was the most Sacrilegious Invasion of God's Prerogative, to make Human Inventions the Essentials of his Worship? All that is pleaded is, That the Church of *England* may be allowed the same Priviledge, which all Sects and Parties assume unto themselves, viz. to determine the Circumstantial of Religion; with what Gestures and Habits, at what Time and Place, God is to be served and worshipt. Except the *Cross* in Baptism, and the *Ring* in Marriage, there are few or no Rites used or enjoyn'd in the *English*-Church, but what may be reduced to those fore-cited Circumstances; and such that do as necessarily attend, and decently represent Evangelical Institutions, as any that can be devis'd by *Dissenters*. There is no Sect, but the Authority of their Teachers prevails in those Instances and Rites, where is no Word of God, to warrant the things that are practis'd by them. As to give  
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some particular Instances in the Worship performed by *Independents*; What Scripture have they to prove their *Covenant*, which the Members of their Churches swear to, before they are admitted by their Pastors and Elders? What Scripture, that declares it *unlawful for Protestants to Marry with Papists*, and the *Godly with the Wicked*, though both may be within the Pale of the Church? What Scripture to prove, That the *Essence of Pastor's, or any other Officer's Call to Preach*, administer Sacraments, &c. depends upon the *Election and Acceptation of the Church*? What Scripture to prove, That, *besides particular Congregational Churches, there is not Instituted by Christ, any Church more Extensive or Catholique, entrusted with Power for the Administration of Christ's Ordinances, or the Execution of any Authority in his Name*? What Scripture to prove, That Ministers *ought not to dispense the Seals to any other, than such, as are Saints by Calling, and to whom they stand related, as Pastors and Teachers*? What Scripture to prove, That *Ordination alone, without the Election, and precedent Consent of the Church, doth not Constitute any Person a Church.*

*Church-Officer? What Scripture to prove, That, No Person ought to be added to the Church, without the consent of the Church it self? What Scripture, that, The Power of Censures is scaled by Christ in a particular Church; and that, no Person ought to be Excommunicated, but as he is a Member of a Congregated-Church? What Scripture, That Ecclesiastical Synods are not entrusted with any Church-Power or Jurisdiction, to exercise any Censures, or impose their Determinations on the Churches or Officers? All these things, and many more, may be seen in the Declaration of the Faith and Order in the Congregational-Churches, agreed upon, and consented unto, by their Elders and Messengers, in their Meeting at the Savoy, October 12. 1658. And, which is the highest pitch of boldness, They are called, The Institution of the Churches, and the Order appointed in them by Jesus Christ; though many of them are, expressly, against Scripture, as well as Reason, Antiquity, and the Laws of this Kingdom. But, that which I produce these Instances for, is, to shew, That the Authority of every Sect prevails so far over those Members that Constitute it, as to*

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impose Laws upon them in Matters pertaining to their Worship, according to their own Reason and Discretion. And, What does the Church of *England* more than this, in the appointing of Her Rites and Ceremonies? Nay, What does She more, than what is allowed Her by those fore-mentioned *Elders and Messengers* at the *Savoy*; for, in the very first Chapter, there are these Words; *There are some Circumstances concerning the Worship of God, and Government of the Church, common to Human Actions and Societies; which are to be ordered by the Light of Nature, and Christian Prudence, according to the general Rules of the Word, which are always to be observed.*

Indeed, if the Governours of the Church of *England* did command such Ceremonies to be used in the Publick Worship, as were used in the *Jewish Church*; that is, if they appointed so many and so painful, so gross and carnal, so costly and typical: Or if, with the *Papists*, they did institute Ceremonies vain and foolish, ridiculous and superstitious; and so numerous, that they tended to confound and distract the minds of Christians, in the observation of them: Or, if



if they should declare them (as the *Papists* do) to be Apostolical Rites, and Essential Parts of the Divine Worship; and therefore, were to be observed immutably, and with an opinion of Necessity; Dissenters had then some Reason to blame our Church, and separate from its Communion. But, the Church of *England* is far from any of these things: The Offices of Christianity are performed with as much Gravity and Simplicity, as they were in the very Age of the Apostles: For, I will be bold to say, That there were as many or more Ceremonies made use of in those Dayes, than are now in the Church of *England*. Who-ever considers the *Imposition of Hands* in Ordination, Confirmation, Penance, and Marriage, (in the last, it is still us'd in the *Eastern-Church*) who-ever considers the Vailing of Women in time of Divine-Service; the *Kiss of Charity* before the Consecration and Receiving of the *Eucharist*; the *Agapa*, or Love-Feasts, after it; Water added to Wine in the Celebration of that Sacrament; putting off of Old Cloaths, putting on of New; drenching in Water, (all alluded unto by the Apostle, *Col. 2.*

11, 12. Col. 3. 9, 10. Rom. 6. 4, 5.) the *Trina Immersio*, or *three-times Plunging* in the Water, used in Baptism: I say, who-ever considers these Rites, as they were Instituted by the Apostles, and used in the Primitive Ages of the Church; will find, That the Church of *England* does scarce use so many; notwithstanding the Clamour of those that blame Her Constitutions, and separate from Her Communion, upon the account of Her Ceremonies and Impositions.

If I am mistaken in my Conjecture about this Matter; yet, 'tis no way injurious to the present Power of the Church of *England*, in appointing Symbolical or Significative Ceremonies in God's Worship: For, (to use one of Mr. *Hooker's* Similitudes, and to conclude this *Query*, as I began it); The Primitive Christians under the Heathen-Emperours, were much like the *Israelites* in their *Egyptian-Bondage*: They were Pilgrims and Strangers; and glad to serve God in Den s, and Caves, and Cottages, in weariness of Body, and anxiety of Mind; and therefore, were rather concern'd to maintain the Life and Being, than to be curious

rious about the Apparel, and Ornament of Religion: But, when God gave them deliverance from their Fears, and Liberty from their Restraints, and Rest from their Enemies; when He made Kings and Emperours, become Christian; then they began to glorifie God with their Bodies, and to honour Him with their Substance and Estates, as well as to worship Him with their Souls and Spirits; herein imitating God's antient People, who thought nothing too costly for the Erecting, Dedicating, and Adorning of the Temple, when they were settled in the *Land of Promise*; though in the Wilderness they had nothing but a moveable Ark and Tabernacle, as the Ensign or Token of God's Glory and Worship.

Qu. 23. *Whether they who separate, or who give the cause of Separation, are Schismatics.*

Ans. No doubt, Those are *Schismatics*, who giveth necessary just cause of Separation: But this *Query*, is as clearly and fully determined by *St. Paul*, as if it had been proposed in his *Dayes*. For, there being a sort of Men arisen in the  
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Church, who taught Libertism instead of the Doctrine of Christianity; and, would perswade Men, upon the account of that Religion, to with-draw their Obedience from their Superiours; the Blessed Apostle endeavours to arm the Christians of that Age against so pernicious a Principle, by telling them, That Christianity laid the greatest Obligation upon its Professors to be obedient to their Superiours: And, then he subjoyns; *If any Man teach other-wise, and consent not to wholesome Laws, even the Words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Doctrine which is according to Godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about Questions, (lick of Queries) and Strifes of Words; whereof cometh Envy, Strife, Railings, evil Surmisings; perverse Disputings of Men of corrupt Minds, and destitute of the Truth, supposing that Gain is Godliness: From such, with-draw thy self. Let but any one impartially Read, and seriously Consider these excellent Words; and then let him judge who are Schismatics; The Conformable Clergy and Laiety of England; or, The Dissenters.*

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οὐκ ἔστιν.

Indeed,

Indeed, If the Church of *England* had forsaken the Common Faith, it had been no Schism to forsake the Church of *England*: If She did injoyne and introduce sinful Rites in her publick Liturgy; or obtrude those harmless Ceremonies, which She Commands, as Essential Truths, and Fundamental Articles of Christianity: If She did command them to be believed, and practis'd under pain of Eternal Damnation: If She receded from any Article of the Creed, or Principle of Christianity: If She obtruded Oaths upon Her Members, as Christians, which might prove destructive to their Allegiance, as Subjects: If any such gross Corruptions were inserted in Her Articles, Liturgy, or Canons, as are justly and truly charg'd upon the *Papists*; then, that Command in the *Revelation* had been applicable to our Dissenters; *Come out of her, My People, that ye be not Partakers of her Sins, and that ye receive not of her Plagues.* Such things as these would justify Men in their Separation from the Prayers, Sacraments, and Constitutions of our Church; till She reform'd Her Errours, and cleans'd Her Self from Her Corruptions. For, there is no doubt, but

Rev. 18.  
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that a good Christian ought as much to dread the imposing upon his Judgment, an Assent to known Errours; and upon his Practises, the acting of known Sins, as the suffering the very Pains of Hell it self. But, our Church never administred any such Causes of Separation. No Persons, within its Communion, have any false Doctrines offered to their Assents, nor any unlawful burthensome Rites imposed upon their Practises.

But, as for many of our Dissenters; They question not only the Power of Bishops, to Govern the Church; but, that of Kings, to make Laws for the security of their own Crown and Government, as well as the common Christianity. They make the People Judges of their own Pastors, and to with-draw their Obedience from those that are lawfully Ordained, and ought to Superintend over them: They forsake their Old Guides, and chuse themselves Teachers out of their own Factions: They renounce, in their Assemblies, the Antient Creeds, which were in all Ages esteem'd, the Badges of Christianity: They dis-use the Reading of the Scriptures in their Congregations, unless they are expounded to the

the People : They assume a Liberty, that was never challenged nor thought of by the Primitive Christians; making it indifferent to be of any Communion, setting up Altar against Altar, gathering Churches not only without, but against all Authority; and, thereby endangering the State, as well as weakning and dishonouring a National-Church. They Null all due Ordination, by enabling Lay-Men to Constitute Publick Ministers of Religion. They impower any one, whom they presume gifted and qualifiycd, to invade the Office of the Ministry, to Preach Sermons, Administer Sacraments, Exclude or Admit (*Clave non errante*) any Members into, or from, their Communion; to Examine the secret state of Souls, to bind Sin upon Men's Consciences, to obtrude on them *Ex-tempore* and Enthusiastick Raptures, and bombast Non-sense, for Supernatural Truths: They evacuate one main Article of the Christian-Creed, *viz.* Faith in one Catholick Church; for, they restrain it to Themselves, as the *Donatists* did of old, and as the *Papists* do at this day. They have a *Fidem Annuam, Menstruam, et Diurnam*, an Yearly, Monethly, and Dayly Faith:  
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What is an Article of Faith to-Day, is many times look'd on as an Errour and Heresie to-Morrow; and every one of their Congregated-Churches have it in their own Power, either to turn *Arians* or *Socinians*, *Anabaptists* or *Quakers*, &c: They go out of their Callings and Stations, and usurp the Office of Bishops, as well as of the Inferiour Clergy: They break the Bonds of Unity, and the Line of Apostolical Succession: They obtrude Oaths and Covenants upon their Proselytes, never known or heard of, since the first Beginning of Christian Religion; by which they invade the Prerogative of the King, weaken His Authority, and endanger His Government. In one word; They will not joyne with Us in the same Prayers, nor Sacraments; nor resort to the same Places of Publick Worship: (for Churches are now look'd on to have as much Antichristianism in them, as Bishops): They will submit to no Law, nor admit of any Discipline, but what is Erected and Executed by themselves (A thing never known, for Criminals to make choice of their own Punishment.) They will have no Publick Act pass among them, without the free consent of All;



All, as satisfy'd in Conscience, That what is decreed, is God's Will. A thing impossible in Nature ! For, if All are satisfy'd, they are not Men; there being among all Men Difference in Judgment : And therefore, in the enacting of all Laws, the lesser Part is determined by the Major.

And now, let the Rational Reader judge, Who are Schismaticks, The Church of England, or Dissenters. I conclude this Query, in the Words of a very eminent \* Prelate: *It was not Philip, but the Dissentions of Athens, Thebes, Sparta, that destroyed Greece. It was not Scipio, but the Factions of Hannibal and Hanno, that destroyed Carthage. We have too many such Masters of Division: Our Schisms in the Church proclaim it. The Question is not now, of round and square, of black or white, of sitting or kneeling. Our Burying, our Marrying, our Christening, our Communicating, are all questioned: Our Churches, our Holy Orders, our Publick Liturgy: Our Lord's Prayer, our Creed, our Scripture: The God-Head of Christ, the Doctrine of the Trinity are questioned. It is not Twins, but Litters of Hereticks, that struggle in the Womb of the Church.*

\* Arch-  
Bishop  
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Nay,

Nay, things are come to that pass, that the King and Parliament, as well as the Clergy of *England*, must be accounted Hereticks and Schismaticks, for maintaining the Essentials of Christianity; and, doing what they can to hinder and dissuade Men from offering the most insufferable Affronts to God's Being and Majesty; and ruining for ever their own Souls, and the establish'd Religion of these Kingdoms.

Qu. 24. *Whether they, who in the Exercise of Church-Discipline, never cease calling on the civil Magistrate, to assist him with his secular Force, do not therein give an evident Sign and Token, that, All true Ministerial and Spiritual Power is dead in them?*

Ans. 'Tis no more a Sign, that all true Ministerial Power is dead in the Clergy of *England*, if they modestly, nay zealously, call upon the civil Magistrate to do his Duty in the Protection and Security of Religion, from Men of Heretical Pravity, and Licentious and Atheistical Principles; than it was in the Primitive Bishops, to request the Assistance of Christian-

stian Kings and Emperours, to suppress those Heresies and Schisms, that endangered the Fundamentals of Christianity, and the Unity of the Church. It is no *Sign* of the uselessness or extinction of the Function of Bishops; if they use all lawful means to accomplish and bring about lawful and charitable Ends. And, What End can be more Generous and Christian, than to secure People in the Performance of their Duty to God, to Man, and to Themselves? What more charitable, than, Not to permit them to throw off all Sense of Moral Honesty and Justice, as well as of Piety and Religion? I will be bold to averr, That, since Men have assumed so great Liberty in Religion, there is less regard had to those Eternal Rules of Right and Wrong, Vertue and Vice; and that, by those very Persons that make high Pretences to Christianity, than hath been observed in many *Pagan-Nations*. 'Tis Presumption, and not Faith, for the Clergy of *England* (as things are now amongst us) to expect God's miraculous Concurrence with them, in the Mannagement and exercise of their Ministerial Office, when there are ordinary means at Hand, to render their Labours

bours so considerable, as to make them see some Fruit (at least) of the Travel of their Souls.

Perhaps this Gentleman thinks, That the great Number of People that flock to *Meetings*, and the solitariness or thinness of many of our Country-Assemblies; is a certain Prognostick, that the *Ministerial Power* is quite extinguished in the conformable Clergy: But, let it be granted, that the Parochial-Churches in this Kingdom were empty, and the unlawful Assemblies full and numerous (the contrary of which is evident, from the late account that was taken of the *Protestant* and *Papish* Dissenters): Yet, first, This would be no Argument against the Clergy themselves; For, though their Labours prove fruitless to their People; yet they may be approved and rewarded by God. Christ Himself had no such success upon His Ministry, whilst He exercis'd it in His own Person upon Earth; For, thus He speaks by the Mouth of His Prophet; *I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain; yet surely, my Judgment is with the Lord, and my Work with my God.* Nay, this would be no greater an Argument of the Expiration

Isa. 49. 4.

piration of the Spiritual Power of the Ministry of *England*, than it was in the Days of *Elijah*; when that devout Prophet presumed, by reason of the general Indulgence granted by *Ahab*, to all kinds of Religions and Impieties. That the whole *Israel* of God had *forsaken his Covenant*, *thrown down his Altars*, and *slain his Prophets*; and he himself was the only Person left, and they sought his Life: For, although he was mistaken in his Computation; yet God Himself mentions seven Thousand, which were all the *Knees that had not bowed to Baal*. But, it does not follow, that all Spiritual Power was dead in *Elijah*, because *Baal* had more Worshippers than the true God; and that the Prophet could have no Redress or Aid from *Ahab*; who was so mindless of the Honour of Religion, and the true Worship of God, that he *sold himself to work Wickedness in the Sight of the Lord*. Lastly, This could be no Argument, That the Ministry of *Athanasius* was evacuated; because almost, all the whole World turn'd *Arians*, but himself. And indeed, who-ever seriously considers the depraved Nature of Man; how much more prone it is to embrace Vice than

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than Vertue, and Errour than Truth; and the Novel, rather than the *good old Way* of Religion; will not be much startled or prejudiced at the Clergy of *England*, if the greatest part of *English-men* (which God Almighty forbid!) should forsake the Communion of the Church, and betake themselves to Paths of Schism and Faction, *Popery* or Atheism.

Qu. 25. *Whether are not they Strangers to the Power and Efficacy of the Divine Spirit, or distrustful of God's Promise, to be alwayes with his Church; Who think Christianity, which both began and spread it self over the World for several Hundreds of Years, under the Heathen and Persecuting Emperours, cannot stand or continue supported by the same Divine Presence and Protection to the Worlds End, without the Aid and Assistance of the civil Magistrate?*

Ans. Certainly those, who were the first Reformers of Christianity in this and some Neighbouring Nations, will not be supposed by any sober Person, *Strangers to the Power and Efficacy of the Divine Spirit, or distrustful of God's Promise,*

wise, to be alwayes with his Church; And yet, the whole Reformation of Religion, from those Errours and Corruptions, with which the *Papists* had sullied its Lustre, and defiled its Beauty; was not without the *Aid and Assistance of the Civil Magistrate*. Now, as Kingdoms and States; so Religion, and the Church, are to be secured and upheld by the very same Means and Methods, by which they were acquired. Alas! What could Arch-Bishop *Cranmer*, *Hooper*, *Ridley*, and the rest of our *Army of Marian Martyrs* have done, to restore Religion to that Purity, which it had at the first; and that Truth, which it had at the Beginning, if they had not been seconded and assisted by the civil Magistrate? *Henry the Eighth*, 'tis true, began the glorious Reformation by vindicating the Rights of his Crown and Government, when he forbad all Suits to the Court of *Rome*; when he denyed the *Pope's Legates* Entrance into his Kingdoms, without special License and Permission, first obtained from Him: When he denyed, and shook off the *Popes Supremacy*, and assumed it to Himself: When he forbad his Dispensations, prohibited the Payment of Impositions to the Court of

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Rome, took the *First-Fruits and Tenths* of all Ecclesiastical Promotions within the Realm, and annexed Them to his own Crown, &c. Edward the Sixth forbade the People to pray to Saints, and to make Prayers for the Dead; caused the Scriptures Translated into English by the Command of Henry the Eighth, to be placed in Churches, for the People to Read therein; and ordered the Composure of Homilies, and a Liturgy; by which, Christians might understand their Duty to God, and pray to Him in an intelligible Language. And, not to dwell long upon all Particulars, which are excellently made known to us by the great Diligence of the Learned Doctor *Heylyn*; the whole of the Reformation, was compleated and establish'd by that Glorious and matchless Princess, Queen *Elizabeth*; whose Name and Memory is as hateful to *Papists*, as it is precious and dear to *Protestants*. But, the Clergy of *England* might as well have tempted to have pulled the Sun out of its Orb, as ever to have reformed Religion, without the Help and Assistance of those fore-mentioned Princes. Next under the Almighty, the Kings of *England* are the *Jachin* and

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and *Boaz*, the Stability and Strength of Reformed Christianity. Why then should the *English* Clergy be supposed *Strangers to the Spirit of God*, if they apply themselves to Supreme Authority, for the Protection of *Protestanism*; and the Punishment of those Enemies and evil Doers, that would undermine and raze up its Foundations? They are *strangers* to the Divine Spirit, that are destitute of its Graces and Gifts: And, in Governours, some of the Divine Graces are to be zealous for Christianity, to be intent in the promoting and strengthening of its Interests; and vigilant against those Enemies, that would dissolve its Unity, and pervert its Truths. And, as for *Distrustfulness of God's Promise*; Let this Gentleman consider in what Scripture God has promised, That either Christianity in general, or *Protestanism* in particular, should for-ever continue the establish'd Religion of this Kingdom. We all know and believe, That the Catholic, or Universal Church, shall never have End: *The Gates of Hell*, (*i. e.* the Power and Policy of Men and Devils) *shall never prevail against it.* But, as for particular Churches, they are am-  
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latory and defectible; as is evident, in the *Jewish* and *Asiatick*-Churches. There was never any particular Church, except the *Roman*, that challenged the Privilege of Indefeasibility.

And, as for *Christianities* spreading it self over the World, under Heathen and Persecuting Emperours, only by the Power of the Divine Presence and Protection, without the Aid of the civil Magistrate; 'Tis true, it did so: And, so have many Thousands of Men and Women for several Years together, been fed with Food from Heaven, without the Help of ordinary and common Sustenance: But surely, such Examples will not warrant any one single Person, to expect the same Miracle from God, and refuse His *Dayly-Bread*. Nay, the true Religion it self flourish'd before ever Christ came into the Flesh, by the Divine Protection, without the Aid of the civil Magistrate: For, the *Israelites* in their *Egyptian*-Bondage, received as little Favour from *Pharaoh* in their Religious, as their Civil Rights. It was only God that supported their Spirits, as well as rewarded their Faith and Patience, under that cruel Bondage. But, when they arrived at *Canaan*, and were settled in the Land of

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Promise; the true Religion did no longer thrive and prosper among them, than it was encouraged and protected against all false and forreign Religions, by the Assistance of the civil Magistrate; as hath been at large proved, in the Answer to the Seventh Query. To conclude; Although Christianity was planted by Miracles, yet its Preservation can be effected by no other Means, than Laws. Indeed, when God revives those Wonders of His extraordinary Providence, which for Fifteen Hundred Years have lain Dormant, we'l admit of such an one as Moses to protect Religion, and forsake Magistrates.

Qu. 26. *Whether to Persecute upon the account of Religion, be not an Indication of a Cainish, Ismaelitish, and Wolfish Nature, and a certain Signe, that such are none of Christ's Sheep?*

Ans. Soft Words and hard Arguments, do best become the Tongue and Pen of a Gentleman. 'Tis true, the Socinian Writers urge the Meekness and Gentleness of Christ, whilst He managed His Ministry upon Earth, as an

Argument to screen themselves, and other Corrupters and Depravers of Christianity, from the Civil Magistrate. But, I know none of that Sect, that press this Argument with that Bitterness, as is express'd in the *Query*. And indeed, whatever they urge either from the Mercifulness of Christ's Laws, or the Meekness of His Example, signifies no more against the enacting of Laws, to punish those that violate and despoil Religion; than that they should urge His sweet and condescending Temper, in Conversing with Publicans and Harlots, to dissuade Magistrates from inflicting Punishments upon such sensual and unrighteous Persons, who violate the Laws of the Second-Table: For, 'tis evident from the History of the Gospel, what sort of Men Christ convers'd with very often, in the Dayes of His Flesh; and how He express'd more Tenderneſs and Meekness to them, than He did to those great Professors of Religion, the Schismatical and proud Scribes and Pharisees. But, His Example will not excuse Magistrates from punishing such Offenders: Neither is Christian-Justice, and Righteousness, inconsistent with Clemency and Lenity  
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of Spirit. And therefore our Blessed Saviour Himself is compared in Sacred Writ, as well to a *Lion* for His Courage and Strength, as to a *Lamb* for His meek and gentle Nature. And, He is stiled Himself, The *Shepherd of Souls*; And that Title imports, that He would have not only His Lambs and Sheep fed, *Joh. 21.* but *grievous Wolves watch'd*, *Act. 20. 29, 31.* and their *Mouths stop* too, when they devour the Flock, and *teach things, which they ought not, for filthy Lucre's sake*, *Tit. 1. 11.* As Christ is a meek Saviour to Returning Sinners, so He is a terrible Judge to Apostates and Evil-doers. Neither does He reserve all His Vengeance and Terrours for another World; but He begins to Execute them in this, by raising up Men of publick and undaunted Spirits, who shall make *Righteousness the Girdle of their Loins*, and *Judgment their Robe and Diadem*; to succour His Church, support His Worship, and punish His Enemies. Nay, 'tis very likely, that those Christians who err with honest Minds and Intentions, (as no doubt, but many of our Dissenters do) though Christ may design to bring them unto Heaven,

because their Minds are alwayes disposed and prepared to embrace the Wayes of Truth and Peace ; yet, because they give ill Examples to others, to become schismatical and disorderly in their Stations, and give occasion to the Enemy to reproach and blaspheme the good Wayes of God ; therefore, He would have those who are His immediate Deputies, and who Rule for Him, and by Him, not to stop the Ears of Justice upon such Persons ; but, by gentle Penalties, to reduce them to that Flock, from which they have stray'd and err'd. And, if such Methods are ineffectual to that End ; yet He would have them punish'd, for the Example of others ; though He may in His boundless Mercy, pardon their Sins, and save their Souls. And herein Christ Acts, as Earthly Princes do, who commit their Power of Punishing to inferiour Ministers and Officers of Justice : But, Acts of Clemency and Pardon, which are the more immediate and sacred Impresses of Royalty, they reserve and keep to themselves. Nothing is more certain, than that God pardons many Sins in the next World, which He punishes by Himself or Deputies

ties in this. Briefly then; 'Tis no *Indication* of any such Nature, as the *Query* mentions, to punish Evil-Doers; no more, than 'tis of a Spirit feeble and cowardly, faint and pusillanimous, to reward those that do well. The Meekness of a Christian Magistrate, consists in being *Eyes to the Blind, Feet to the Lamé, and Fathers to the Poor*; in having Ears ever open to Hear, and Bowels alwayes tender to pitty the Complaints of Widows and Orphans, of the Forlorn and Oppressed. But, when Magistrates neglect their Duty, to *break the Jaw bone of the Wicked, and pluck the spoyle out of their Teeth*, as *Job* goes on in that Chapter. When they will not imitate Him, by whom they are advanced, and from whom they derive their Power, in *repaying Men according to their Deeds, Fury to his Adversaries, and Recompence to his Enemies*; When they will not imploy their Power for His Honour, from whom it descends; but permit the Christian-Faith to be torn in Pieces, by a thousand Sects and Factions, and Wolves to prey upon Christ's Flock; and the great Enemy of Mankind, and his Wicked Instruments, to be allowed such a Range  
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Isa. 59.  
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and Walk, in a settled National-Church, as to sport themselves in our Ruin; by corrupting the Worship of God, and bringing Scorn and Contempt upon all the Offices of Christianity, and the whole Ministry thereof: This Temper is so far from the Meekness and Gentleness of a Christian, that I may rather ascribe to it those terrible Epithites, mentioned in the *Query*; and further affirm, That 'tis to be wickedly unjust; 'Tis an *Indication* of a meen Unmanly, as well as of an Unchristian Spirit. A Man may be guilty of the most inhumane Cruelty, though he act nothing Cruel in his own Person: For, he that permits others to do Mischief, and connives at their Cruelty, when 'tis his Duty, and in his Power, to restrain and muzzle their Malice; is as guilty before the great God, as if he were an immediate Agent in such Mischievous Acts and Attempts. And, till it be proved, That Men's Bodies are more precious than their Souls, and their Estates of greater worth than their Religion; no one has reason to believe, But to Tollerate *unruly and vain Talkers and Deceivers*, (for, so the Apostle Characterizes those that vent idle Fancies, and

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corrupt and with-draw others from the Simplicity of the Truth) is an Indication of more Cruelty, than to Tollerate so many Thieves and Murtherers upon publick Roads and High-ways.

Qu. 27. *Whether can any think, That they who Persecute Christ in his Members, despoiling them of their Goods, and imprisoning of their Persons; and that too, for their faithful adhering to the plain and undoubted Commands of their Heavenly Sovereign; will speed better at the Great Day of account, than those whom Christ Himself hath told us, Shall be then rejected; but for not visiting and relieving His poor Members, when in want, in sickness, or any other Adversity?*

Ans. This Query hath many things questionable in it: For, first, 'tis denied, That any are true Members of Christ, besides those that are united to His Church. For, Christ is the Head, and His Church is His Body: And, no one can be a Member belonging to the Head, unless he be some way or other united to the Body. Indeed, 'tis requisite that the Body be athletic and sound; for, else

a Christians joyning to it, may endanger His internal Union to Christ, who is His Head. And, notwithstanding those Methods that Empericks of all sorts have taken to discover some dangerous Distempers in the *English-Church*; yet She is of that Healthful Temper, that need to suck Her Breasts, or be nourished with Her Milk; Unless it can be prov'd, That She renounces the Truths of Christ, and owns the Errours of Satan, or enjoyns Her Members to live in the Practise of any known Sin; She is a sound Part of the *Catholick-Church*, which Christ hath purchased with His own Blood. And therefore, who-ever they are, that with-draw themselves from Her Communion, cut themselves off from Christ the Head; And, if for so doing they are punish'd, their Punishment is no Persecution: For, Persecution can properly be inflicted upon none, but those that belong unto Christ. But suppose, secondly, That those who separate from the Communion of Our Church, are, notwithstanding their Separation, real Members of Christ's Mystical Body; yet none of them are Persecuted for their *Faithful adhering* unto Christ,

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Christ, or the undoubted and plain Commands of their Heavenly Sovereign. I may adventure to make the same Challenge to this Gentleman, as hath been frequently made to *Papists*; Let him produce one Person, that ever suffered upon the account of Christianity; *i. e.* either for believing any Article of the Christian-Faith, or performing any Essential Duty of the Christian Religion. If we take a Survey of any of the Ten Persecutions, as they are recorded by Historians, from the Reign of *Nero*, to the end of the Reign of *Galerius*; we shall find how far different the Punishment of our present *Dissenters*, is from the Persecution of the Primitive Christians. And, this will appear, if we survey either the Cause of their Persecutions, or the sharpness and pain of them.

As for the first: That which exposed the Primitive Christians to the Rage and Butcheries of their Persecutors, and was the Fountain of those Torments and Miseries, which they suffered and underwent; was, for believing and professing the Doctrine of the Gospel, and living up to the main Precepts of Christianity. But, For what Vertuous or Religious Action

Agion, are any of our *Dissenters* punish'd? Who is it that suffers for owning Christ to be the *Messias* of the World, or that He is the Risen from the Dead, and Ascended up to Heaven, &c.

I know it will be here replied, That *Dissenters* suffer for performing the Indispensible Duties of Christianity, viz. for Preaching, for Praying, &c; and therefore, their Punishment is a Persecution. But, this has been often Answered; That 'tis not for the Performance of those Duties, but for the disorderly and irregular way of performing them, that they are punish'd: They are punish'd for not doing them in that due manner, as is injoyn'd them by their Superiours: They are punish'd, for being disorderly in their Stations and Callings; for being disobedient to Government and Laws; for censuring the Actions of Authority, and usurping the Office of the Ministry; for endangering the Peace of the State, and violating the *Unity of the Church*: And, if these things ought not to be punish'd, neither the Society of Church or State can stand or subsist. The one will be over-run with Factions and Seditions,

ditions, the other with endless Schisms, Heresies, and Contentions; and so, both will come to final Ruin and Destruction. In a word; If Execution of Laws upon *Dissenters*, must be called by so bad a Name as *Persecution*; they are persecuted *to*, what the Primitive Christians were persecuted *from*; I mean, from their Churches, or publick Places of Divine Worship.

And, their Degrees of their Persecutions are as far different, as their Causes: For, in that of *Dioclesian*, the Persecutors were filled with so much Rage and Cruelty, that some of the poor Christians were burnt alive; others Rosted with slow Fires; others were pull'd in pieces, by having their Limbs made fast to the Boughs of Trees, which being brought together for that purpose, were afterwards suffered to return to their Natural Position: Some were starved to Death; many slain with the Sword; others devoured with wild Beasts: Some were flead Alive; others beaten to Death with Rods of hot burning Iron: Some were returned back to Prison after their Torments, there to languish away in Cold and Hunger, Sorrow and Pain. These

These were the Persecutions of the Saints of God, as Ecclesiastical Historians give us an account of them. But, as for the Persecution of our Dissenters, (if the Penalties inflicted on them must be called by that Name) it extends only to a pecuniary Mulct, or a short Imprisonment, or some such easie Penalty; and that too, seldom inflicted upon any other Persons, than those who are the Heads of Factions, and Seducers of the People; and who, under pretence of Religious VVorship, make it their business to alienate the Minds of their Hearers from their Mother-Church; and, by Preaching, and declaiming about Persecutions, beget groundless Suspitions, and unreasonable Fears and Jealousies in them, against Authority. In a word; VVho-ever, under a Cloak of Religion, and zeal for Christ, forms Parties, imposes Oaths, endangers the Peace of the State, or creates Schisms in the Church; such Persons are not persecuted for the sake of Righteousness, but *suffer as Evil-doers, and as busy-Bodies in other Men's matters*, contrary to that Apostolical-Precept, 1 Pet. 4. 15. I may propose that Question in this Case, which a Reverend VVriter asks in another;

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If a Father should go about to correct his Child, and not to kill or maim him; Whether he might in such a case, cry Murder, Murther, and try Mastery with his Father, and alledge his own Judgment against his Parents, to prove his own Innocency? The Instance is plain and obvious; and therefore, I forbear the Application of it, and proceed to the last Query:

Qu. 28. *Whether, since Offences will come, it be not every ones Concern, to be more than ordinarily careful, he involves not himself in that dreadful Wo, pronounced against them, by whom they come, Mat. 18. 7?*

Ans. I hope, by *Offences*, this Gentleman does not understand that which troubles, displeases, or discontents another: For, if so, there was never any Law or Constitution made since the Creation, that complied with all Men's Humours and Judgments. It may not be unlikely, that our Blessed Saviour understands by them Heretical and false Doctrines, according to what St. Paul sayes, 1 Cor. 11. 19. and pronounces, a *Wo* against  
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those who broach and propagate Opinions, to seduce and hinder others in the course of Piety. But, that Interpretation which is least lyable to Exception, and which seems to be our Saviour's Design in that Scripture, is, to arm his Followers against those Persecutions, which in succeeding time should be rais'd against them, for embracing and professing His Gospel. These Persecutions, St. Paul calls, *The Offence or Scandal of the Cross*, Gal. 5. 11. And, Christ pronounces a *Wo* against those that should be the Authors of such Persecutions, to discourage Christians from owning of His Name, and adhering to His Truths. And surely, none but frantick and wild Persons, that are quite forsaken of Reason, will charge the Government of this Church or Kingdom with any such Cruelty.

But, suppose we understand the fore-cited Scripture in a greater Latitude, *viz.* for any thing which Administers occasion to another, to transgress any Law of God's; yet, nothing from hence can be objected against publick Authority in the Execution of any Law, against *Dissenters*: For, though it be true, that private Persons



sons are bound by the Law of Charity, to forbear their Christian - Liberty, and to desist from those lawful indifferent Actions, which they prudentially fore-see, may either confirm another in sin, or tempt him to commit it; yet surely, this will not involve our publick Governours in the *Vvo* pronounced by our Saviour; because, Laws are enacted for the orderly Performance of Divine Worship, and Preservation of the Unity of the Church. Mr. Baxter does very generously prevent any such Accusation in these following Words; *It is a private Uncatholick Principle, That a Minister should more fear or avoid the offending of his own Particular Flock, than the offending or hurting the Catholick-Church, or of many Particular Churches, where the Interest of Christ and the Gospel is greater.* And, I hope, a National - Church has as much Authority over its Members, as a private Minister has over his Flock; especially too, when 'tis so apparent to any unprejudiced Reason, both from the Principles and Practises of many Dissenters, that they take no *Offence* at any of our Laws and Constitutions but what they bring upon themselves, by their own perverted Judgments,

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private Fancies, and itching Ears. Nay, it may be rationally feared, that too many of them are offended, not through weakness and darkness of Understanding, but Malice and Obstinacy of Will.

It very frequently happens in the private Concerns of Human Life, that one Man may be the occasion of another's sin; and yet, the Guilt of him who sins, cannot any way be charg'd upon that Person, whose Action was the occasion of it: If it could, our blessed Saviour Himself would not be innocent; for, 'tis evident from the New-Testament, how His mean Appearance in the World, was that which gave Offence to the whole *Jewish*-Nation. And, I hope, the Rule before specified is as strong in the behalf of publick Authority, as of private Persons. For, that in the enacting of Laws, is to consider not so much what will please the Humours, as advance the benefit of those under its Charge and Protection. Indeed, 'tis an *offence*, and a *Woe* belongs to it, for any Law to be made with a design and purpose to ensnare the Consciences of Inferiors. But, this does not concern the Authority of  
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this Church and Kingdom: For, none of our Laws do thwart or contradict those that are Divine; and therefore, no Man's Conscience can be injured or ensnared, by paying Obedience to them. The *offences* taken by private Persons against publick Laws, made for the general good, is just as if weak Eyes should be offended with the Sun's Beams; or Cripples, with those Persons that go more streight and upright than themselves. There hath been, and will be to the World's End, Men of that Temper, that are as desirous to receive *offences*, as others can be to avoid them; and that will charge publick Authority, as well as private Persons, with the most scandalous Crimes and Actions. If Innocency it self displease them, it shall not escape being accused and impeach'd. And, to bring the Matter nearer to the present Debate; many find fault with the Church, and its Government, that their own greater Faults may be conceal'd, and less talk'd of. If, with *Theudas*, they can induce others to believe, they are *some body*, they hope that their own vicious Practises will be either unobserved or uncensured. And, 'tis incident to most

Men to believe, That something of Goodness and Religion must be in those Persons, that are ever and anon talking and complaining of the Decayes of it.

But, a Day is coming, when all Men's Disguizes and Vizards shall be pull'd off; and their most retired Actions, laid open and manifest to Angels and Men. In the mean time, it ought seriously to be laid to Heart, with what Confidence those Persons can charge the Church of *England* with *Offences*, and deny the Magistrate's Power and Supremacy in matters of Religion; and yet, over and again have acknowledg'd it in the most sacred and solemn Oaths; and (as their publick Offices in the Kingdom oblige them) have sworn to put those very Laws in Execution against *Dissenters*, which they believe to be *against all Forms of Justice both Divine and Human, and a Violation of the very Law and Light of Nature*. And, when it was in their Power to have deserted those publick Offices and Employments, have yet in the most solemn manner, renewed their Oaths and Engagements, and conformed to the Churches Laws, by Receiving the Holy

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*Eucharist*, according as the last excellent Statute made in that behalf obliged them. Now, for these Persons to question, not only the King's Coercive Authority, but the whole Ministry and Being of the Church of *England*; and, to accuse Her Government of more Tyranny, Schism, and Persecution, than ever yet was objected against Her by the most violent of Her *Romish* Adversaries, argues such a depraved Temper of Spirit, that, who-ever is guilty of it, must conceive himself obliged to make some publick Satisfaction; if he retains any principles of Honour, as a Gentleman; or of Conscience, as a Christian. Men Eminent in their Country, and such as have a Reputation for Knowledg and Wisdom, might do more good by their Examples in the present Age; than the Church can do with its Censures, or Church-Men with their Instructions: But, if such Persons will not only separate from the Church themselves, but invite others to tread in the same Paths of Neutrality and Enmity against it; and, by the Authority of their Examples, and the Efficacy of their Perswasions, endeavour all they can to obstruct the Current of

those Laws, which they themselves, by all the Obligations of Honour and Religion, are bound to put in Execution: Surely, this (if any thing in the World) is to *lay a stumbling - Block in the Way* of their Christian - Brethren; and infallibly to involve themselves in that dreadful *Wo*, which they so rashly pronounce against others. If any shall chance to peruse these Papers, whose Consciences shall accuse them of the fore - specified Guilts; let them, in the Name of God, *Remember whence they are fallen, and do their first Works*; Let them call to mind that Christian Zeal and Courage, that they once had for their Prince and Church; and act with that Vigour for both, as their own Oaths and Honour binds them. Strange Dissemblings with God and Man, may bring those dreadful Judgments upon this miserable Nation; that Men of Honour and publick Employments, shall neither have Law to protect their own Persons nor Rights, nor any King or Church to be valiant and zealous for. But, I have too far digressed from the *Query*.

And,

And, notwithstanding all that I have written in the Churches Vindication; many will reply, That, although the Ecclesiastical Laws and Constitutions administer no just matter of *Offence* to *Dissenters*, yet they do little or no good; and therefore, it were far better they were repealed, and every one left to his own Liberty; for then, the Interest of *Protestantism* would be strengthened, and that of the Common Enemy weakned and destroyed. But, besides what I have already said to this Objection, *viz.* How it does quite dissolve the Unity of the Church; which was the main thing that Christ took care of, before He left the World: I shall further add that Saying of a *Roman*, when *Rome* resembled *England*, by the ill Government of *Galba*; *That it is far better to live where nothing is Lawful, than where all things are Lawful.* The Scripture compares the Church Cant. 6. to an \* *Army*; and for an *Army* to be left 4. 10. to its own Liberty, and every common Souldier to observe no Order, nor live under any Discipline; is the ready way to expose it, as a Prey, to the first Invader. The little good that is done by the Laws of this Church and Kingdom, proceeds

ceeds either from the want of their due Execution, or from the Indisposition of those Persons, who expect Protection from Laws without paying any Reverence or Obedience to them. What Effect can Ecclesiastical Laws have upon those Offenders, that are either Atheists or Infidels? Men are so obstinately set upon their Lusts, that the Censures of the Church, and the Admonitions of Church-Men, do no more good upon them, than a Bullet shot against a Brazen-VVall, which recoils back with the most forcible Violence upon him that shot it. We are never to expect any Good Effects from the Laws of the Church, unless they are seconded and assisted by the Laws of the State: But, to repeal the Churches Laws, would administer too just an occasion to the *Papist*, to Triumph in the Ruin of it. For, what Truth or Being could that Church pretend to, that had neither *Ephod* nor *Teraphim*, i. e. no Order, no Law, no Liturgy, no Bishop, no Discipline: A Consideration, that ought seriously to be thought on, by all the Lovers of *Protestanism*. VVe have now unanswerable Arguments, to justify our Departure from *Rome*. But, if all our  
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Laws and Constitutions must be laid aside and abrogated, because some are offended at them, a new Weapon would be put into the Hands of our implacable and greatest Enemies; and we should be just like the *Israelites*, when they waged War with the *Philistines*; *In the very Day of Battle, there was neither Sword nor Spear* <sup>1 Sam. 7. 22.</sup> *found in the Hand of any of the People.*

'Tis none of my Business or Intention to exasperate any Man's Spirit, much-less to direct my Superiours, what they are to do in behalf of this distracted and divided Church and Kingdom. But, if Men will proceed so far, as to question the whole Power of King and Parliament in matters of Religion, and have all Laws laid aside, that concern the Defence of Christianity; If they will prefer Confusion before Order, and Poyson before wholsom Food; and make their own Misery, and that of the publick too, an Act of their own Choyce: Lastly, if they will be so conceited, as to think themselves wise enough to censure and instruct their Governours; and yet, at the same time would be esteemed so weak, as to be offended and scandalized: Surely

ly then, it will be discerned with Ease, that 'tis not weakness of Understanding, or tenderness of Conscience; but strength of Prejudice, and perverseness of Will, that hinders such Men from returning to the Communion of the Church. And therefore, if the Authority of this Church and Kingdom hath any regard to its own Honour and Safety, it will stand up in a zealous Vindication of its own Liberty and Power, against those *Donatistical-Spirits*, that would enslave the one, and do deny the other. The Truths of the Gospel, and the Power and Liberty which Christ has ratify'd and confirmed to Governours, ought not to be betrayed by a Cowardly Condescension to please Men; whose Principles make them to be peevish, and discontented with all Government, but what is of their own Erection. There is no reason in the World, that Magistrates should desist from exercising their Authority upon those Persons who question or deny it. For, 'tis neglect of this, that does encourage Men in their Schisms and Separations, Disobedience and Rebellions; and provokes God to deprive His Deputies of that Talent of Authority and Power, with which He

He intruſts them; and which they have been ſo far from imploying to His Honour and Intereſt, that, by laying it up in a Napkin, they have betray'd and expos'd it, to the Scorn and Insolence of His and their own greateſt Enemies. God reſolves to continue the World in its Frame and Order, till he comes to judge it: And, the chief Reason of his Continuation of it, is, the Illustration of His own Glory. And, that is discerned and display'd not ſo much in ordering the Frame of Nature, and diſpoſing of the vigitable and ſenſitive Parts of the Creation, to thoſe Ends which He deſign'd in the making of them; as in the Moral Government of Rational Creatures by Laws, and keeping them within the Bounds of their Duties to Him, and their Superiours. But, when Authority makes it ſelf deſpicable, it makes God ſo too; from whom, as from the Sun, it borrowed all its Beams of Power and Majeſty. And Hiſtories (whether Sacred or Prophane) are not ſo barren of Inſtances, how God hath revealed His Wrath from Heaven againſt thoſe Governours, and deprived them of the Honour of being His Deputies, when their Spirits have been ſoftned  
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with Sensuality and Ease; and they have liv'd in fear of their Inferiors, who ought to live in fear of them.

Lord Bacon's Essay of Unity in Religion

But, I proceed too far upon this Argument: I conclude my Answer to this Query, in the excellent Words of a Wise and Learned States-man: *Heresies and Schisms are of all others the greatest Scandals, yea, more than the Corruption of Manners: For, as in the Natural Body, a Wound or Solution of Continuity, is worse than a Corrupt Humour; so it is in the Spiritual. Nothing doth so much keep Men from the Church, and drive Men out of it, as Breach of Unity.*

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**FINIS.**

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